

**LITERACY OUTSIDE SCHOOL:
HOME PRACTICES OF CHINESE IMMIGRANT
FAMILIES IN CANADA**

A Dissertation Submitted to
the College of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for a Doctorate of Philosophy in the
Department of Curriculum Studies
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By

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ABSTRACT

Based on a socio-cultural approach to literacy, this ethnographic study provides a description and analysis of four Chinese immigrant families' home literacy practices outside school in a Canadian context. The purpose of this research was to understand Chinese immigrant families' beliefs and uses of literacy in their intersecting worlds of home, school, and community.

Four focal children were chosen from the families. Two children (age six and seven) were from families with one parent being a graduate student in a Canadian university, and two children (age eight and almost three) were from two families of entrepreneurs, who owned and operated restaurants. Data were collected during a nine-month period and subjected to thematic analysis. Four themes emerged from the data: home environment, home-school literacy connections, social integration, and media influence on literacy development.

The findings indicate that the nature of the home literacy practices is multifaceted and complex. Factors such as the families' literacy experiences and heritage in China, their experiences in Canada, and the social context of the families' lives interweave in their daily literacy and living. In these families, the Chinese literacy traditions and cultural values of the parents dominate the home literacy practices. These literacy traditions, embedded in Confucianism and the socio-cultural context of modern China, differ from the values of mainstream Canadian schools, and thus contribute to the mismatch between immigrant children's home and school literacy practices.

The findings also indicate that family physical environment and economic status have relatively little impact on children's literacy development. Rather, parental educational background, and the social environments including parent-child interactions, shared family activities, and the degree of parental involvement and support for children's learning play an important role in the literacy activities of the four children and their families. This research also demonstrates that the four children and their families' literacy and living were influenced by the choices made by the families around access to and utilization of media.

The disparity between immigrant children's home and school literacy practices often hinders their literacy development and cultural integration into Canadian society. Implications of this study highlight the importance of communication between home and school. There is a need for teachers and educators to take a proactive position to understand the children, connect classroom practices with children's cultural identity, and involve parents with children's learning. The study suggests immigrant parents need to provide a variety of learning activities and opportunities for their children and be involved in all aspects of their children's learning. Furthermore, they need to empower themselves by learning English language and become informed of the literacy practices in schools in the host society. The implications for policy makers suggest that it is necessary to connect curriculum theory with practices for providing ESL services to students, and make first language and literacy education a part of school curriculum.

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DEDICATION

*To my father Li De Chun and my mother Chen Feng Lan,
whose love has traveled with me across the ocean.*

*To Barry and Yvonne Brown, and Roberta Wells,
whose care and support have made Saskatoon my second home.*

*To the participating families,
who have opened their homes and admitted me into their lives.*

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PROLOGUE

THE INTERFACE BETWEEN LITERACY AND CULTURE:

A JOURNEY FROM EAST TO WEST

Marsh Languages

The dark soft languages are being silenced:
Mothertongue Mothertongue Mothertongue
falling one by one back into the moon.

Language of marshes,
language of the roots of rushes tangled
together in the ooze,
marrow cells twinning themselves
inside the warm core of the bone:
pathways of hidden light in the body fade and wink out.

The sibilants and gutturals
the cave language, the half-light
forming at the back of the throat,
the mouth's damp velvet moulding
the lost syllable for "I" that did not mean separate,
all are becoming sounds no longer
heard because no longer spoken,
and everything that could once be said in them has ceased to exist.

...
(Atwood, 1995, pp. 54-55)

Atwood's poem depicts my early immigration experience at the interface between Eastern and Western cultures and languages in Canada. I wrote in 1997 this journal entry after several months in Canada:

I was born and educated in rural China where my childhood environment and education rendered me "invisible". The notion of selfhood never came into my mind. But when I got off the plane from Beijing to Vancouver, I realized that I was different from what I had been.

Never before had I felt that my identity was important in my life. I gradually became visible.

For the last twenty-four years I have been living in a solid Chinese culture where my personal identity was never an issue. In China my education taught me to put collective interests before my own personal interests, to study hard to serve the country and China's Four Modernizations (industry, agriculture, national defense, science & technology). The Confucian tradition taught me to be humble and obedient to elders and authorities. In these two frameworks, our existence is "most critically oriented to human existence as a whole" and "in collective societies, such as those of Chinese countries, the goal of achieving social harmony is held to take precedence over the individual" (Chang & Holt, 1991, p. 251). My existence was that of an individual in the collective. Immersed in this tradition, I followed what I had been taught and given. I never once stopped and asked myself: Who am I?

However, my first day on the campus of the University of Saskatchewan I felt panic as I could not find any trace of my past of my larger collective society in my totally new Western world. It seemed that I had never existed before. This "otherness" and "loneliness" awakened my sense of selfhood and my miserable ego trip began: Who am I? People call me Chinese. The language I speak, the way I think and do things makes me recognize that I am not only different, but unique. My past resides in Chinese traditions and values, Chinese ways of knowing and living, which I bear with me. And in my present existence I have become a visible individual: a Chinese student in Canada. The recognition of my selfhood is liberation within myself. It not only widens

my understanding of life, but also enhances my confidence in my academic pursuits in Canada.

The biggest challenge I face is whether to adapt to the Western tradition or to follow my Chinese tradition in academic writing. Constantly I feel powerless and uneasy when I write my academic papers in English. And I know the problem is not my English proficiency, but my way of thinking and writing. Zhang (1995) points out that "people of a given culture come to use their language in ways that reflect what they value and what they do" (p. 13). Research shows that writing in a second language is influenced and shaped by the cultural and linguistic conventions of the writer's first language. Having been trained in a Chinese educational system for nineteen years and having succeeded in my education, beginning in an illiterate rural Chinese family and progressing to achieve a master's degree in a Chinese university, I have formed my way of thinking and writing that is not only a personal style that is more descriptive and literary, but also a Chinese style that reflects the Chinese scholarly traditions and characteristics. Bodde (1983) illustrates:

*The nature of the Chinese language makes the Chinese world view concrete and specific instead of abstract and general, and that the Chinese way of thinking is neither synthetic nor analytic, but accumulative; one concrete image after another is presented in the order of their occurrence in the writer's mind.
(as cited in Hua, 1993, p. 32)*

In contrast to my Chinese way of writing and knowing, English discourse depends on the notion of logic which appeals to arguing from premises to conclusions (Grabe & Kaplan, 1989; Hua, 1993)... I often

find myself caught between the two competing, divergent ways of knowing and thinking.

Another big challenge I face is learning how to engage in Western critical thinking. In the Western educational tradition, students are encouraged to challenge authority by questioning -- Whose knowledge is most worth knowing? What and how can we know? What should we know? And why? Whose interests are to be served? It is believed that by encouraging students to challenge authority, their ability and adequacy to deal with complex and controversial problems can be enhanced. In contrast, my exposure to the Chinese scholarly and social tradition which has over 5000 years' history, and my education in a socialist context, encourage me to respect history, tradition, and authority. Chinese people believe that history, tradition, and authority will teach goodness and it is wrong or offensive to question them. Our goal is to achieve common social harmony. So when I am asked to read and write critically, I feel uncomfortable, guilty, and lost. To question what is from the top, or the authority, is not my way of acting. When I read and write I tend to accept what is there, but here I already know that as a scholar, especially a female scholar, I need sharp eyes and a sharp pen to challenge what I am told. So very often I am trapped in the two spheres and do not know which way I should go -- it is hard to abandon one's respected traditions and values, even harder to work against them.

My own experience as a cross-cultural learner has inspired my curiosity to uncover the learning experiences of other Chinese immigrants. I have met many Chinese families in different occasions during the past three years in Saskatoon. Many of the parents, especially the mothers, do not speak English; however, their children use English predominantly to communicate with others.

When they heard I was studying literacy education at the University, many parents discussed with me their children's education. The common problems they shared with me were their confusion about their children's learning in the schools, and their difficulty in preserving Chinese at home. The encounters with the families and their children on those occasions was the force that urged me to understand the lived "space" of the Chinese immigrant families in Canada. My position as a Chinese immigrant has allowed me to understand both the world of Chinese immigrant families and the world of mainstream Canadians; and my own cross-cultural experience has provided me a unique lens to read and write, and to make meaning of the lives of other Chinese families as well as my own life in Canada.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Recent literacy research has focussed on literacy learning in natural societal settings, with an emphasis on social processes of literacy practices, and inductive personal meaning making. As a result, the issue of literacy is no longer seen as a large and impersonal phenomenon, but as a personal and human concern (Jennings & Purves, 1991; P. H. Johnston, 1992). Since the 1980s, literacy researchers have gradually recognized the importance of the home environment in children's literacy development (Dickinson, 1994; Heath, 1983; Spreadbury, 1994; Taylor, 1983; Wells, 1985). The research findings reveal tensions around home literacy practices that do not match literacy practices in schools or the workplace, especially within minority families who have different family backgrounds, beliefs, and literacy values (Dickinson, 1994). This situation is especially true for immigrant minorities who have voluntarily moved to a new society to improve their quality of life and who have a distinct perception of treatment by members of the dominant group and by the institutions controlled by members of the dominant group (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991, p. 8).

In the United States, one fifth of school children live in households where a language other than English is spoken (Waggoner, 1994). In Canada, recent statistics show that nearly 17% of people speak a mother tongue other than English or French and the number is increasing ("Linguistic Face of Canada

Changes," 1997). The majority are from immigrant families. Each year over 200,000 immigrants arrive to re-establish their lives in a new linguistic, cultural, and social environment. They experience a series of adjustments in all aspects of life, including language, culture, employment, adult education, children's education, and social relationships. There is great discontinuity in their lives, especially in their literacy practices, as language facility is the most important skill affecting the success of adjustment (Liu, 1996; Williams & Snipper, 1990). For adults, there is literacy discontinuity between work and home; for children, there is discontinuity between school and home. For the family as a whole, discontinuity exists between the larger society and the family itself.

There are three broad strands or themes in home literacy research. One addresses mainstream, family, literacy practices and includes the work of Taylor (1983), who studied six middle class children's literacy practices in family contexts. The second strand is concerned with home literacy practices of urban, lower-economic status families, mostly involuntary minority families (involuntary minorities are people who were brought into present society through slavery, conquest, or colonization, such as African-American Black people and indigenous peoples (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991, p. 9)). Research in this area includes that of Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines (1988), who described inner-city Black families, and Valdés (1996) who studied Mexican-American families, and numerous family literacy intervention programs such as the Even Start Family Literacy programs in the United States studied by Baxter (1995), Karther (1995), and Parks (1995), and many similar programs such as the Bookmates and Book Bridges programs

in Manitoba, Homespun Family Literacy program in Alberta, and Come Read With Me programs in Saskatchewan in Canada as summarized in Thomas, Skage, and Jackson's (1998) *Family Connections: 1998 Directory of Family Literacy Projects across Canada*. The third strand includes comparative studies that investigate mainstream and involuntary minority home literacy practices such as that of Heath (1983) who explored children's literacy practices at home and school in two different working class communities, one White and one Black.

Research in the three strands has been conducted mainly in an American context. These studies have contributed to my understandings of literacy, particularly my perception that different cultures have different literacy practices. Home literacy research in the Canadian context has focused mainly on family intervention programs (Thomas, Skage, and Jackson, 1998). The few Canadian studies that focus on non-intervention programs include: Neilsen (1989) who studied the literacy and living of three, mainstream Canadians in Hubbards, Nova Scotia; Fagan (1998) who studied the community literacy practices in the socioeconomic context of small towns in Newfoundland; and Sénéchal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley (1998) who studied the differential effects of home literacy experiences on the development of oral and written language of middle-class, English-speaking, Caucasian children in Ottawa. I have located only these few studies on the literacy practices of racial minorities in Canada.

In Canada (and the United States), research on immigrant language and literacy experiences has focused mainly on linguistic and cognitive aspects of English learning: the acquisition of English as second language (Gunderson,

1991; Piper, 1993). Numerous studies have been conducted in ESL classrooms, language programs, laboratories, or workplaces to analyse the acquisition of English as a second language (Cummins & Swain, 1986; Ellis, 1988; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Thomas, 1994). However, little is known about the literacy practices of Canadian immigrants in their daily living. Immigrants' home literacy practices, characterized by their use of two languages, remain unknown. Most of the studies of immigrants' literacy practices have been conducted in the quantitative paradigm, what Eisner and Peshkin (1990) have referred to as "the domination of the psychometric model". Supporting Eisner and Peshkin's view, Lazaraton (1995) did an informal survey of four major journals in the field of applied linguistics over a ten year period: *Applied Linguistics*, *Language Learning*, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, and *TESOL Quarterly*. He found that the number of studies employing qualitative, especially ethnographic techniques represented only a fraction of the total articles. Lazaraton's (1995) survey indicates that "ethnographic methods are still underrepresented" in the field (p. 456).

It is apparent that there is a need to conduct qualitative research on the literacy practices of racial minorities in their daily living in Canadian contexts. My study has addressed this gap in literacy research in Canada by conducting an ethnographic study of Chinese immigrants -- the largest racial minority in Canada, and by focussing on the family as a learning environment for the bi-literacy and bi-cultural development of both adults and children.

Purpose of the Study

This study documents the literacy practices within the home milieu of four Chinese immigrant families in Saskatoon, a city in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada. It is my understanding, as researcher, that language and literacy practices are embedded in cultural norms and values; learning and development are meaningful only in their socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, this study also explores the immigrant families' cultural practices accompanying their literacy experiences, which include reading, writing, and oracy practices. The purpose of this research was two-fold: a) to describe the language and literacy acquisition environment in the home milieu to gain an understanding of bi-literacy (English and Chinese), and bi-cultural practices of four Chinese families; b) to understand four Chinese immigrant families' beliefs and uses of literacy in a Canadian context as they experience cultural transition and adjustment. The main question of this study is: what is the nature of home literacy practices of Chinese immigrant families? The guiding questions for the study of the four families are:

1. What does the home literacy look like in the four Chinese immigrant families? In what social contexts do the children use English and/or Chinese? What are their functional uses of each language?
2. What are the parental beliefs about literacy? How do parents' beliefs influence their perception of their children's school literacy and education?
3. How do families deal with cultural conflicts between home, school, and community literacy practices?

4. How do the children and their families' social integration into Canadian society influence their literacy practices? And what is the role of media in shaping literacy practices?

Definition of Home Literacy

The term "family literacy" was first used by Denny Taylor (1983) in her study of six mainstream American families to refer to "the continuously diffuse use of written language in the ongoing life of the family" (p. 9). Over the past sixteen years, the term "family literacy" has been expanded and developed, and has become "a multi-faceted, interactive, social process which shapes ways of thinking for both adult and child " (Thomas & Skage, 1998, p. 5). Thomas and Skage (1998) have suggested that the term family literacy has been used in the research literature in three distinctive ways:

1. interest in the way literacy is used within families,
2. the study of relationships between literacy use in families and children academic achievement, and
3. the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs to facilitate the literacy development of families (p. 6).

In this dissertation, I focus on the first two of these aspects, that is, the ways literacy is used within the home milieu, and the relationships between literacy use in the families and the children's academic achievement. For clarification, I have used the term "home literacy", rather than "family literacy", throughout the dissertation to differentiate from the term "family literacy

programs". In the literature, the term "family literacy programs" appears frequently, in effect item three in Thomas and Skage's (1998) delineation of the term "family literacy". This term tends to be used to denote literacy programs that work with families, parents and children, to improve the literacy skills of parents and children. By using the term "home literacy", I am avoiding any confusion with these structured programs used to promote literacy. My exploration of literacy goes far beyond basic literacy programming.

Significance of the Study

This study, which explores Chinese immigrants' bi-literacy and bi-cultural practices within their home milieu, contributes to literacy theory development in the following four respects. First, as few studies have addressed bi-literacy and bi-cultural practices within immigrant families, the study broadens the knowledge base of the literature in home literacy research. Second, the study serves to bridge school and home literacy contexts. If schools are to create meaningful links with families in our multicultural society, it is important for educators to understand children's literacy practices as they occur naturally in the home setting. This study provides educators with such understandings. Third, by providing an account of immigrant children and their families' life experiences within social, economic, and political contexts, the study serves to bridge family and society contexts. The study helps agencies such as the Open Door Society (a non-profit organization that provides assistance to immigrants), and institutions such as schools and universities to understand immigrants' literacy practices,

and their transition processes. Fourth, the study may be useful for developing programs to respond to the needs of immigrant children and their families who are in the process of cultural change. The contexts and situations of the children and their families observed may inform persons seeking an understanding of the daily life struggles of immigrant families.

Positioning of the Researcher

This study describes four Chinese immigrant children and their families' literacy experiences, viewing the home milieu as an important learning environment. My position as a cross-cultural researcher has allowed me to enter the homes of the immigrant families to discover the role of literacy in their daily lives, and how literacy in two languages was played out. My position as researcher, field worker, and author in this study has been influenced by my own experiences as a Chinese graduate student who came to Canada on a student visa and later chose to stay as an immigrant. Situated in my own life history, educational and cultural background, the presentation and my interpretation of data in this dissertation reflects who I am as the researcher and author (Fontana & Frey, 1994). At times, my own "biases and taken for granted notions" may be exposed and my own way of looking at the world and the data may be identified (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 372).

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation contains eight chapters. In this first chapter, I have provided an introduction to the study, highlighting the purpose and significance of the study. In Chapter Two, I present a review of the literature, focusing on the understandings of family, literacy, and culture. In Chapter Three, I examine the study's methodology used; and in Chapter Four, I describe the literacy practices in the two academic families with Yue Zhang and Yang Li being the focal children. In Chapter Five, I portray the literacy practices in the two entrepreneurial families with Derin Liu and Amy Ye being the focal children. In Chapter Six, I focus on the discontinuity between home and school that characterized the four families. The influence of culture, values, socio-economic status, and ESL policies are also examined. In Chapter Seven, I discuss the themes identified in Chapters Four and Five. This chapter shows that the impact of home environment on children's literacy acquisition is not trivial. The impact of families' physical and social environment, social integration in Canadian society, and media engagement on immigrant home literacy practices are discussed. Chapter Eight concludes the dissertation with answers to my research questions, a discussion of the implications of this study for educators, parents, and policy makers, and my recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review is divided into three sections. In the first section, I have examined the nature of family as a cultural setting in general, exploring from a developmental perspective the nature of the family and the characteristics of immigrant families in their host society. In the second section, I reviewed recent research on the understandings of literacy development to define literacy from a socio-cultural and a socio-linguistic perspective. In the third section, I reviewed studies of home literacy, including such issues as the interrelationships among family, literacy, and culture; home literacy activities and their functions; literacy acquisition in the family; and the home environment and its relation to home literacy.

I have used a socio-constructivist view of knowledge as the epistemological foundation of my research. I agree with P. H. Johnston (1992) that:

through language we name the world we live in. We make and order our knowledge of the world with language, and we do so in interaction with others. We each construct our versions of the world and live within these realities. (p. 6)

From a socio-constructive perspective, the practices of literacy, what they are and what they mean for a given society, depend on the social and cultural

context. The outcomes of an individual's literacy learning are shaped by the social contexts in which the learning is embedded and can only be fully understood in relation to these social contexts (Langer, 1987). Literacy behaviours of individual people gain their meaning from the contextual settings that cultures and subcultures provide for their uses. These contexts have an overwhelming influence on literacy purposes, demands, and processes (Mikulecky, 1990). My research on home literacy is based on this socio-constructive approach to literacy. The setting for this research is the homes of the families, where literacy is an inherent part of the cultural fabric in which the children and their families lived their lives. In this study, I have focused on four Chinese immigrant families, looking specifically at the literacy experiences of one child in each family.

Family as a Cultural Setting

To better understand Chinese immigrant-home literacy, it is necessary to understand what a family is and how it functions. To explore this aspect of literacy, I have provided a review of the nature of the family from a developmental perspective, and I have examined the nature of immigrant families in the following aspects: parental perceptions of their children's education, and immigrant children's socialization patterns.

The Nature of the Family

Families are groups related by kinship, residence, or close emotional attachments which display four systematic features: interdependence, selective boundary maintenance, ability to adapt to change and maintain identity over time, and performance of certain family tasks such as physical maintenance, socialization, education, and control of social and sexual behaviour (Zeitlin, Megawangi & Kramer, 1995). The family is a basic social institution, a living system (Leslie & Korman, 1989; Montgomery & Fever, 1988), "an example of an open, ongoing, goal-seeking, self-regulating, social system" (Broderick, 1993, p. 37). This open, ongoing system has the following characteristics:

- 1) Through actions and interactions, the components of the family are dynamically related to one another and to the environment.
- 2) The actions and qualities of the family are emergent from the interaction of its components.
- 3) The family is a rule-governed, societal system whose members behave among themselves in an organized, repetitive manner and its patterns can be abstracted as a governing principle of family life.
- 4) The rules are hierarchically structured in that all rules are not equal in their breadth of application.
- 5) These rules serve as guidelines to maintain and regulate relationships among the components, to bond the members together into a coherent unit, or to maintain a boundary among members to preserve a measure of independent personality and limit the degree of enmeshment, and to

govern the balance of interaction between the family and the outside world. (Broderick, 1993, pp. 38-40)

Every family has its goals, pursued through executive functions which in turn are activated by information from three sources: information of the world outside, from the past with a wide range of recall and recombination, and about its current status. These information sources prescribe the family culture, including both the physical and social culture of the family. That is, the information is processed to maintain or protect the family material milieu incorporating family space, time, and possessions as well the social milieu including family lifestyles, family worldviews, and socialization.

Influenced by the social, economic, and political practices of a particular society, families in different societies have different family lives and worldviews. Even within one society, patterns of family life differ in terms of values, education, occupation, income, religion, and ethnicity. Different economic status, ethnicity, and religion shape different family values (Leslie & Korman, 1989; Ogbu, 1978). Family as a social institution is interrelated with other major societal institutions such as government, the economic system, education, and religion (Broderick, 1993; Leslie & Korman, 1989; Ogbu, 1978). As a result, different societies have different family cultures both physically and socially. For example, influenced by Confucianism for over two thousand years, Chinese families put a high emphasis on kinship network, and a close "guan xi" (relations) among family members (Chang & Holt, 1991). Confucianism also had and still has a strong influence on Chinese education. Most Chinese parents place a high importance on their

children's education and encourage their children to try their best to pass College Entrance Examinations, because "going to college" is closely connected to a professional career in their future (Wu, 1998, p. 40). Moreover, because of dramatic political shifts, Chinese family lives, including their education, have been closely tied to the goals of the socialist government (I. Epstein, 1991, Hu & Seifman, 1987). These events in China's history and politics have shaped the particular cultures of Chinese families, which are different from families of other cultures those in mainstream Canada.

Family from a Developmental Perspective

The family is dynamic and developmental. The developmental framework, which shapes my understandings of the family, stresses a dialectical relationship between the individual and the family. It focuses on both the individual within the family setting and on the family as a whole unit, and on the family life circle as a series of developmental stages through which the family experiences change. Change in the family is not only internal to itself, but also external to its social environment. Leslie and Korman (1989) illustrate that:

the family unit is affected by both the interaction between the family members and by the external social environment. The family unit and individuals change as these ongoing processes change. Within each developmental stage, there are certain tasks that must be accomplished to prepare the family for change and for competency in the familiar and social world. (pp. 206-207)

From this perspective, family behaviour is a result of the socialization among family members and with the external social environment. Socialization involves learning the culture as it encompasses learning the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and techniques that a society possesses. Through socialization, both children and adults transform themselves into socially functioning persons in society. In this sense, the family is a learning environment for both children and adults (Laosa & Sigel, 1982; Leslie & Korman, 1989).

A key concept of socialization is family activities through which family behaviour patterns are formed. As Cole (1985) explains, an activity coexists with the broadest context relevant to ongoing behaviour, and is composed of actions that are systems of co-ordination in the service of goals, means, and limitations in the process. Leont'ev (1981) regards an individual's activity as a subsystem in the broader system of social relations (p. 47). Activities are a series of events and contexts in which relationships between children and adults are developed. An activity is mutually constructed by participants; the construction contains elements that are both social and individual (Cole, 1985, p. 153).

The role of family activity is crucial for learning and development. According to Cole (1985), cognitive processes, such as the development of schemata or scripts that represent our knowledge of objects, situations, events and actions, meanings and concepts, are acquired by children as well as adults through social events within particular contexts. Vygotsky (1978), whose research emphasized social learning, developed the notion of the zone of proximal development – the difference between "the actual development as

determined by independent problem solving and the potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). As both parents and children acquire knowledge in family activities through socialization and collaboration, the notion of the zone of proximal development applies to both children and adults.

Immigrant Families

Immigrant families differ from mainstream families linguistically and culturally, and they have different family patterns. Chinese immigrant families in Canada tend to be nuclear, patriarchal families with strong relationships with their extended family and the Chinese community. In order to present a holistic picture of the literacy and living of Chinese immigrant families, I have examined immigrant family life from the following aspects: parents' perceptions of education, their perceptions of their economic future and its relation to their adaptation, immigrant children's cultural and social adaptation and their socialization, and parent-child communication. In the previous section, I have discussed family as existing in a socio-cultural context, using a socio-constructive perspective to understand their literacy practices. As the following discussion of research will point out, the socio-cultural context for immigrant families is changing rapidly, with the values of the traditional family context conflicting with the values that emerge when a family immigrates to a new and different social context.

Minority Status and Schooling: Parental Perspectives

Ethnographic studies of minority education since the 1950s, particularly immigrants' education, have raised various problems faced by minorities. Discontinuity in culture, language, and power relations makes minority education far from satisfactory. Cultural models of immigrants have distinguishing features (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). Immigrant minorities have generally moved to their present societies to increase their economic well-being, to achieve better overall opportunities, or to find greater political freedom. These expectations continue to influence the way immigrants perceive and respond to treatment by members of the dominant group and from institutions controlled by members of the dominant group. Immigrants appear to interpret and respond positively to the economic, political, and social barriers they face. They see these barriers as temporary problems that will be overcome with the passage of time, hard work, and more education.

Canada has witnessed an influx of Chinese immigrants from Mainland China in the past decade. Statistics Canada 1996 census indicates that the number of immigrants from Mainland China accounted for 8.5% of the total immigrants who came to Canada between 1991 and the first four months of 1996 (Statistics Canada, 1996). These Chinese immigrants are voluntary minorities who have moved to Canada to seek economic and educational advancement and political freedom. Although Canadian society has been described as a cultural mosaic and the United States as a melting pot, recent studies of Chinese immigrants in the two countries do not indicate significant differences in their

socio-cultural experiences (Chao, 1996; Chen, 1996; Wong, 1989; Zhang, Ollila, & Harvey, 1998).

These studies on Chinese immigrants, noted above, in these two countries demonstrate similar values Chinese parents place on their children's education – the values that they bring from their homeland China. The most significant feature of immigrants' responses to barriers is that they tend to interpret their exclusion from better jobs and other positions because they are foreigners, or because they do not speak the language of the host society well, or because they were educated somewhere else (Basran & Zong, 1998; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). Therefore, Chinese immigrants have developed responses interpreted as folk theory (a concept they have developed among themselves) where education plays a central role – "*education as the single significant avenue to status mobility in the new land*" (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991, p. 11, italics mine).

Among Chinese immigrant families, this folk theory is played out in two respects: the families' pragmatic attitudes toward learning, and their perceptions of language barriers. Chinese immigrant families often adopt instrumental attitudes and strategies that are conducive to school success. The parents perceive education as the pathway to their family and children's long-range goal of employment, good wages, and other benefits, and are willing to make sacrifices to work towards these goals for their children. With these pragmatic attitudes, the parents see the cultural and language differences as barriers to be overcome to achieve their goals, and overcoming these barriers as essential to

their academic, social, and economic success. With this practical perspective on language and cultural barriers, the families regard this adjustment as non-threatening to their own culture, language, and identity (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). This folk theory is different from the folk theory of some other cultural groups, for example, Mexican American immigrant families. In Valdés' (1996) study, the Mexican families, though they regard overcoming language and cultural barriers as important, do not perceive school success as the single important way to success in their children's future.

With these cultural features or their folk theory, Chinese immigrant families have unique bi-lingual and bi-cultural practices within their family milieu -- a cultural family in a host society different from their home culture. Because of this distinctive feature, many Chinese immigrant families put a high emphasis in their family value system on children's academic, child rearing, and family socialization (Chen, 1996).

Besides their belief that only a good education can guarantee a good career, Chinese parents' emphasis on education in Canada and the United States is influenced by their immigrant status. Because they believe that their experience as foreigners limits their job opportunities, they have to be better than mainstream North Americans to be successful (Chao, 1996; G. Li, 1998, Zhang, Ollila, & Harvey 1998). In addition to the cultural values they bring to North America, most Chinese parents in North America, especially Chinese mothers, share the following similarities: a) high expectations, workload, and building study skills. Chinese parents regard high expectations from home as a motivation for

their children's learning, and they emphasize developing good study habits from an early age; b) high parental investment and sacrifice. Chinese parents are willing to invest more time, money, and attention in their children's education and to give up everything for their children's education; c) regard for the family, more family stability, and the mother as teacher. Chinese children's success in school brings honor to the family and the ancestors. Chinese parents are more likely to maintain family stability to ensure a more stable life for their children. Usually Chinese mothers take a significant role in their children's education (Chao, 1996, pp. 410-413).

Immigrant Children

While many children of other racial minorities are traditionally viewed as lower academic achievers, Chinese immigrant children have been traditionally known as high academic achievers in both Canada and the United States (Chao, 1996; Chen, 1996; Schneider & Lee, 1990). However, Chinese immigrant children experience culture shock in their initial experiences in a new country as do other immigrant children and adults. The socio-cultural differences are sometimes significant factors that hinder immigrant children's adaptation to a new society or educational system. Research indicates that in immigrant children's academic performance, social and cultural factors are more important than linguistic ones (Edwards, 1985; Fu, 1995).

Hamalian and Bhatnager (1985) argue that immigrant children experience culture shock at two levels: they are confronting different social value systems

and different behaviour expectations; and they are caught between the expectations of school and parents (pp. 116-117). Their study revealed that immigrant children showed significant social complexity and flexibility as they developed their values. McKay and Wong's (1996) study of Chinese adolescent immigrant students demonstrates that the Chinese immigrant students employed a variety of strategies to cope with the new environment; and they negotiated "multiple, dynamic, and often contradictory identities" in a multi-cultural learning environment (p. 577). At the interface of two cultures, the Chinese children are situated in complex social relations, and their lives entangle not only relations to teachers, peers, and parents, but also their need to establish new cultural and ethnic identities (McKay & Wong, 1996, p. 603).

Hamalian and Bhatnager (1985) point out that social acceptability is another important factor in adjustment to and assimilation into a new society, and most immigrant children have negative experiences in socialization; for example, Black and Asian children find acceptability neither among white peers, nor with teachers. Immigrant children's negative experiences may increase their dependence on parents for socialization. By this account, the relationship between children and adults may be determined by adults' social space instead of children's social space (Cole, 1985). This experience differs from that of mainstream North American families, where parents orient their children from a young age to be independent and individualistic, and encourage them to engage in their own social activities (Heath, 1982). The different experience may also influence the parent-child relationship. It may result in children's resistance to

their heritage or culture and first language in trying to be assimilated into the mainstream culture (G. Li, 1998).

The family as a basic institution is a developmental and dynamic system characterized by the socialization among members of the system and with outside social contexts. It is in the process of the social activities of the family that learning and development take place and that the norms of culture are transmitted and acquired. Immigrant families, with their distinctive linguistic and cultural features, have different family values and beliefs from those of the dominant society: they place strong emphasis on their relationship to their extended families; they regard education as the single means by which they can achieve upward social mobility; and they perceive cultural and language differences as barriers that can be overcome to achieve their goals. This explanation of immigrant families' linguistic and cultural features is central to my study because these distinctive values prescribe the patterns of their everyday living, and the relationships among the families, the schools, and the communities.

Literacy as a Way of Living: Towards a Definition of Literacy

In the last section, I have provided an understanding of the cultural features of immigrant families. In this section, I will provide a framework for understanding what literacy means in this dissertation. I have included a definition of literacy from a socio-cultural perspective, and a discussion of who is considered literate based on this definition. This explanation of the meaning of

literacy is crucial for this study because my interpretation of the home literacy practices are related to how I define literacy and who I consider to be literate.

Literacy: A Socio-cultural Perspective

Over the last four decades, literacy researchers have developed a sophisticated understanding of literacy education at both theoretical and practical levels. Literacy is no longer thought of as a technical ability to read and write, nor the ability of individuals to function within social contexts associated with daily living. Rather, beyond these capacities, it is an ability to think and reason, a way of living, a means of looking at the world we know and how we behave in the world (Langer, 1987; Schieffelin, 1986; Street, 1993). Bakhtin (1981) asserts that language and literacy are the means by which people situate themselves in their social worlds and that learning to use language involves learning the truths about human relationships.

This expanded notion of literacy asserts literacy is a transaction between learners and their social environment; literacy is an interactive process; it is contextual, embedded in a cultural way of thinking and learning. Therefore, it can only be fully understood in relation to socio-cultural contexts (Heath, 1983; Langer, 1987; Neilsen, 1989).

The socio-cultural view of literacy challenges the traditional view of school as an isolated institution of academic learning. Literacy may be transmitted and acquired in a variety of settings via a variety of processes (Lankshear & Lawler, 1987). It does not begin in school and end in school. Rather, it is a continuum of

individual, family, community, school, and workplace experiences. Patterns of literacy use and belief differ from family to family, from community to community, from culture to culture, and from school to school. Literacy permeates all aspects of life and is a part of culture (Au, 1993). The processes and settings of literacy learning as a socio-cultural phenomenon vary extensively to reflect the cultural pluralism of social contexts in which literacy is used (Goodman, 1986; Williams & Snipper, 1990).

Who is Literate: The Socio-linguistic and Socio-political Issue

The socio-cultural perspective of literacy has drawn attention to the learners' social and cultural backgrounds. It has changed the whole notion of what it means to be literate and who is literate. According to a UNESCO definition, a functionally literate person is one:

who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his [sic] group and community and also enabling him [her] to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his [sic] own and the community's development. (UNESCO, 1988, p.8)

From this definition, being literate is associated with a person's socio-cultural background and personal and social identity. A person's own language and culture are an important determinant of how she or he learns and of what is learned. However, in Western developed societies such as England and North America, the notion of literacy is defined in terms of the official language and white Eurocentric culture (e.g. Heath, 1982, 1983; D. Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines,

1988; Teale, 1986). The mainstream way of using language (standard language literacy) in speech and print and the mainstream way of thinking and reasoning have been the norm endorsed by schools and other institutions and agencies. For example, schools have promoted scientific, essayist literacy and analytic linear thinking as a universalistic literacy -- the norm of literacy. Language minority learners' first language and their use within their cultural milieu -- the vernacular literacy or hidden literacy -- have been absent (Macias, 1990; Venezky, 1990; Voss, 1996). Vernacular literacies, which are oral-based and reflect a narrative mode of knowing (Bruner, 1986), have been excluded or at least marginalized from mainstream literacy practices in schools (Bennett, 1991; Le Page, 1997).

Giroux (1991) points out that the marginalization of the vernacular literacy of minority people is a result of viewing cultural literacy as Eurocentric. The marginalization is removed from the language of social justice. To understand literacy as a discursive practice, we must recognize that the differences are crucial for understanding not simply how to read and write, but also to recognize that "the identities of 'others' matter as part of a broader set of politics and practices aimed for the reconstruction of democratic public life" (Giroux, 1991, p. x). Macias (1990) argues that literacy education in an English-speaking society should:

- (1) take into account the characteristics of the learner, including prior non-English language literacy ability, and (2) recognize the existence of literacy in other languages within the country, understanding that these

are valuable in and of themselves as literacy, and acknowledging their utility or value as a bridge or transfer to English literacy. (p. 21)

Venezky (1990) distinguishes three literacy cases among nonnative speakers of English from a particular culture:

- 1) nonnative speakers of English, literate in their own language.
 - 2) nonnative speakers of English, lacking required literacy in their own culture.
 - 3) nonspeakers of English, lacking required literacy in their own culture.
- (p. 13)

This classification provides a reference as to how to label people's literacy levels, but the definition again neglects the complexity of literacy for language minorities, especially immigrants who have at least two different literacy practices in a host society. Therefore, adding to Venezky 's (1990) categories, I think there are at least two cases among nonnative speakers of English in relation to their English literacy:

- 1) nonnative English speakers, literate in English.
- 2) nonnative English speakers, lacking required literacy in English culture.

Therefore, there are three alternative patterns of literacy for language minorities: first language, second language (implying no first language literacy), and bi-literacy (Macias, 1990, p. 18).

In sum, literacy is not just a language issue, but also a socio-cultural, socio-linguistic, and socio-political issue. What it means to be literate is not simply the ability to read and write, but also a way of living and a way of thinking.

Literacy is a socio-cultural process through which people make meaning for themselves and the world where they live their lives. Defining literacy and who is literate from social, cultural, and political perspectives is significant for understanding the differences in the ways literacy is practised in the homes. These perspectives allow me to include literacy practices in the families' home languages as well as in English language. I will also situate my understanding of their practices in their respective contexts, and look at the home literacy differences as different socio-cultural processes constructed through their different social experiences.

Literacy and Living: Home literacy Practices

The complexity of literacy issues increases as literacy researchers go beyond school environments to refocus their studies in literacy practices in families and communities. Both sociological and anthropological perspectives have provided evidence to indicate a discontinuity between school literacy practices and home and community literacy practices (Au, 1993; Chandler, Argyris, Barnes, Goodman, & Snow, 1993; Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1983; Neilsen, 1989; D. Taylor, 1983; D. Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Valdés, 1996; Wason-Ellam, Blunt, & Robinson, 1995). The consequences of a school and home literacy dichotomy are that learners in school become detached from real life situations and cultural practices. School education has "[led] people away from their past and their family; it is the main cause of alienation as well as the main cause of acculturation" (Jennings and Purves, 1991, p. 8). Therefore, there is an

appeal to examine literacy practices deconstructively in the social and family settings to contribute to the understanding of this discontinuity and provide an insight for solving some of the problems in contemporary literacy education.

Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991) conclude from their research that families are most effective influencing children's literacy and language achievement when they function as educating agents. They suggest that a profile of "family as educator" should consider five factors:

1. *Opportunities to learn*, which includes ways parents indirectly facilitate children's literacy through providing access to other people and activities, promoting personal interests, and exercising control over their leisure time.
2. *Parental direct teaching*, which refers to frequency and style (positive or negative) of parent-child interaction in school-related tasks such as homework.
3. *Literacy environment at home*, which includes parents' own literacy behaviors and preferences, and parental provision of literacy to the child.
4. *Parental education*, which refers to the levels of educational attainment of parents.
5. *Parental expectations*, which refer to parental aspirations for their children that are transmitted through demands, support, or encouragement.

Snow et al.'s (1991) profile of "family as educator" is important to my research on the home literacy practices of the four Chinese immigrant families. This profile has provided a thematic framework for my understanding of the divergent ways literacy is used in the families. In this section, I have first examined the relationship between family, literacy, and culture. Second, I have examined what people do with literacy in the home, family activities and their uses, that is, what literacy opportunities parents can provide for their children. Third, I have discussed literacy acquisition in the family milieu in relation to parent-child interactions. Lastly, I touched upon the influence of home environment on home literacy learning, which includes factors such as family material resources, social relationships, and parental educational levels. The discussion on the intersecting relationship between family, literacy, and culture emphasizes the role of culture and the central place of the family as the contextual settings of home literacy practices, and provides a background for understanding the many faceted literacy uses in the families.

Literacy, Culture, and Family

The relationship between literacy and culture has been examined extensively in the literature (Au, 1993; Blount, 1982; Langer, 1987; Wagner, 1991, 1993; Zhang, 1995). Culture is the "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man [woman] as a member of society" (as cited in Blount, 1982, p.

56). A society's culture consists of the categories of knowledge that members of a society have to know or believe or use in order to organize their behaviors.

Literacy as a way of living is part of a culture. Language itself is an individual cognitive as well as a cultural phenomenon: it arises in the life of an individual through ongoing exchanges of meanings with significant others (Halliday, 1978, p. 1). The uses of language (e.g. ways of speaking and writing, choices of words) are culturally encoded. Zhang (1995) notes that people of a given culture come to use their language in ways that reflect what they value and what they do. Language reflects and reinforces the values and beliefs of a given culture and at the same time is shaped by that culture (p. 14). As Saussure (1960) points out, language is a social fact.

Directly related to language as a social fact, literacy, on the other hand, is a social act. Literacy activities are embedded in the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they occur. Shaped by different social and cultural norms, literacy acts – their functions, meanings, and methods of transmission – vary from one cultural group to another (Langer, 1987; Wagner, 1991). Therefore, researchers suggest a much broader approach to the social/cultural context in which literacy is acquired, including such factors as age, gender, environment, and language background (Wagner, 1993, p. 12).

Neilsen (1989) notes that literacy has many houses, each of which we can learn to make our home (p. 10). The uses of reading and writing in our everyday domestic lives are a distinctive world of literacy, the one in which most of us feel at home. The distinctive world of literacy that exists in people's home

surroundings and, in particular, their different ways of passing on literacy values and skills that they embody, reflect the cultural experiences that are essential to their lives.

Studies of home literacy practices have indicated that the importance of cultural values in the literacy lives of immigrant families. Valdés' (1996) study of ten Mexican immigrant families, for example, indicates that the values that the ten families brought from their rural, Mexican background determine how they view their children's schooling and learning at home. Different from mainstream American values of school success, these Mexican families did not place high significance on their children's school education because they believed that all people have talents, and individuals who did well in school were not necessarily intelligent. In these Mexican families, it was more important for the children to learn to discipline themselves, respect others, and take responsibilities for younger children. Fishman's (1988) study of home literacy practices in an Amish family and their community also suggested that literacy is a socio-cultural practice. Amish literacy, as Fishman discovered, is bound not only in biblical texts, but also in the community. Fishman writes, "while the Amish believe in most circumstances that meaning resides in the text, they clearly demonstrate the fact that the meaning is culturally shaped by the individuals and the community instead" (p. 158).

These studies demonstrate that becoming literate is a matter of becoming enculturated in one's socio-cultural worlds; literacy is seen as a social and cultural continuity, the means by which the family as individuals conduct their

own lives and construct their lives in the community and the society (Fishman, 1988, p. 143). The family is the place where literacy and culture intersect in the socio-cultural continuity. These studies stress the importance of culture and the home in forming children's practices of literacy, and indicate, as in Valdés' study, the problems of discontinuity between school and home that occur when values of home, school, and society are different. In Chinese homes, problems also occur if there is a difference in literacy beliefs between home, school, and society. This study examines intensively the nature of Chinese families' experiences with home literacy practices.

In order to better illustrate the relationships between family, literacy, and culture, I have adopted Bhola's (1996) model of the practice of home literacy as my framework for understanding the place of the family in the larger socio-cultural contexts (See Figure 1). From Bhola's (1996) perspective, the family exists interdependently in a network of mutual relationships with institutions of the school and in the context of communities and larger socio-cultural systems in the society. He also maintains that the family is central in this network of social relationships because the family is the place where the family members are interconnected to a wide range of experiences that shape their personalities, their relations to others, and to the communities. In this sense, it is necessary to focus on the family as a whole and at the same time highlight individual members of the family as interdependent in the research of home literacy. In this model, Bhola also points out the significance of the relationship between literacy and

media, and suggests that media as cultural products offered to both children and adults in the family as part of the curriculum or by the society are significant.

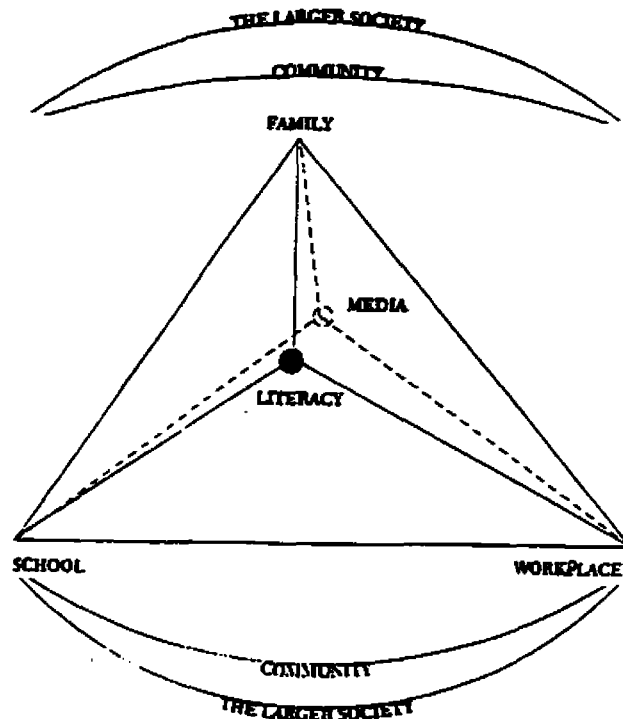


Figure 1. Bhola's model of home literacy practices. This model from Bhola (1996, p. 38) provides an overview of the complexity of literacy as a concept, and the importance of family in defining literacy.

Bhola's (1996) model assumes an ideal relationship between the family, the school, the workplace, and the community. However, as he points out, in practice, it is common that disconnection exists among these sections. Sometimes, the family, the school, or the workplace may not be in mutual interface, or the community may not exist for certain groups of people. For

example, Chandler, Argyis, Barnes, Goodman, and Snow (1993) concluded in their study that schools and educators have neglected the relationship between the family and the school.

Bhola's model has informed my understanding of the practices of home literacy as a whole, and influenced my research process in that I look at home literacy practices through the individual focal child in each family. In this study, I have centred the scope of my research on the four focal children. The scope of this research has determined the landscape of home literacy practices that I have focused on. Thomas and Skage's (1998) child literacy perspective illustrates the landscape of my research:

When the family literacy perspective shifts to the child, the role of the family becomes central in questions related to early language and print experiences at home and the acquisition of literacy, parental support and school readiness, or later school achievement of children (p. 5).

I also recognized that literacy is inseparable from its culture and the socio-cultural environment in which it is embedded. The Chinese immigrant children's home literacy practices are an important part of their cultural experiences in two languages and cultures. The children's families, being the core in their intersecting relationships with Canadian schools and communities, were the focus of this research. I have also examined media, including print media and audio-visual media, as they were also central to three of the four children and their families' everyday literacy practices.

What People Do with Literacy: The Functions of Literacy

Because my study was undertaken to gain an understanding of people's daily living with literacy, it is crucial to know people's literacy acts and their uses of literacy. Literacy activities are goal-oriented. People read and write for certain purposes. Generally, there are four purposes for literacy use in society: knowledge gain, personal empowerment, participation in society, and occupational effectiveness (Guthrie & Greaney, 1991). Just as literacy can be understood only in relation to its contexts, the functions and uses of literacy activities can be understood only in these contexts. Literacy uses and purposes differ significantly from each other in different social networks (Mikulecky, 1990). Guthrie and Greaney (1991) have suggested that distinctive social contexts prescribe qualitatively different literacy activities; the situation leads to the development of a purpose for reading or writing. There are three domains of reading literacy use: reading for leisure, reading for occupational/school purposes, and reading for participation in community such as government and church. The home is where literacy activities in all these domains take place. Like literacy in other social contexts such as school and the workplace, literacy activities at home are characterized by time spent, subject matter, genre, use, and situation.

After a review of the research from varied international contexts, R. L. Taylor (1995) has listed the following recurrent shared home literacy activities:

- 1) family activities promoting togetherness.
- 2) family use of the public libraries

- 3) parental modeling of reading
- 4) practical reading at home
- 5) shared reading by family members
- 6) parental support of school
- 7) verbal interaction in the home
- 8) family television use (or media use)
- 9) writing activities in the home. (pp. 194,197)

R. L. Taylor found that home literacy activities centre on certain themes that characterize the literacy interests and functional uses of literacy in the home. These themes include collective identity, global knowledge, intellectual development, news and political issues, occupational reading, aesthetic appreciation, leisure reading, creativity, and children's reading (p. 202).

These literacy activities serve as social organizers of everyday family life, and are the energies that allow the family to function effectively in larger social contexts (Mikulecky, 1990). Mikulecky (1990) classified literacy functions in the home setting into the following seven categories:

Instrumental. Information about practical problems -- price tags, checks, bills, ads, street signs, house numbers.

Socio-interactional. Information for social relationships -- greeting cards, cartoons, bumper stickers, posters, letters, newspaper features, recipes.

News-related. Information about third parties or distant events -- newspaper items, political flyers, messages from government offices.

Memory-supportive. Memory aids – messages on calendars, addresses and telephone books, inoculation records.

Substitutes for oral messages. Notes for tardiness at school, messages left by parent for child.

Provision of permanent record. Birth certificates, loan notes, forms.

Confirmation. Support for currently-held ideas and attitudes – brochures on cars, the Bible, directions for putting items together. (p. 28)

The literacy activities the families are involved with and how the parents provide access to different literacy opportunities are significant indicators of effective literacy environment (Teale & Sulzby, 1986, Lesman & Jong, 1998). This review on what people do with literacy provides some background information on what opportunities parents can provide for their children in their home settings, and what functions literacy serves in their lives when the children and families engage in different literacy activities. During the course of the research, I have intensely focused on these aspects of home literacy practices.

Child Literacy Development in the Family

Literacy is a continuous process in children's development, beginning at home before students go to school. Many immigrant children began their literacy learning in their first language at home before they came to Canada. Therefore, child literacy acquisition is an important area of my research. In this section I look at literacy acquisition of first and second language learners.

Child Literacy Acquisition

Young children's early reading and writing development is a continuous and unified process in their socio-cultural contexts (Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Teale & Sulzby, 1986, 1989). Research indicates that literacy learning begins early in life and moves through several developmental stages. Teale and Sulzby (1986) emphasize that children learn to be literate throughout the developmental stages, and this development in learners is emergent and is progressing.

Early literacy acquisition recognizes the following characteristics of literacy learning: a) literacy learning begins early in learners' exposure to print in their environment especially in their home and communities; b) literacy develops from real-life settings in which reading and writing are used to accomplish goals; c) reading, writing, and speaking develop concurrently and interrelatedly; d) Literacy is learnt through active engagement and construction of learners' knowledge of how written language works (Teale & Sulzby, 1989, pp. 2-5).

Literacy Acquisition in First Language

Literacy acquisition theory emphasizes social support systems of learning especially the role of scaffolding that parents or older siblings provide to help children participate in reading and writing activities (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). "The adult relinquishes more of the responsibility for creating the social interaction and comprehension of the text to match the child's increasing capacities" (Dixon-Krauss, 1997, p. 19). Cazden (1983) has generalized adult assistance to children's language development to three broad kinds: scaffolds,

models, and direct instruction. Adults can contribute to children's learning through several types of scaffolds, for example vertical construction, in which an adult asks a child for additional new information in each utterance, or a highly structured game-like routine such as peekaboo. In modeling, an adult provides examples for a child to learn either through reading to the child or by speaking for him/her. For direct instruction, the adult not only models a particular utterance, but also directs the child to use the appropriate social language and correct vocabulary.

From a Vygotskian perspective, adults' instruction plays a major role in child development. The child's concepts of words are formed in the process of learning in collaboration with adults (Vygotsky, 1986). Therefore, in the family, parents' literacy habits have a great impact on children's literacy development. Adults influence children's literacy learning through parental modeling. Parents' attitudes towards literacy and the amount of time and the quality of the time they spend interacting with children are crucial to foster children's literacy learning (Richardson, Sacks, & Ayers, 1995; D. Taylor, 1983). Parents influence children's learning mainly through parent-child oral communication and parent-child storybook reading.

Parent-child oral interaction is an important part of home literacy activities. Oral communication between parents and children has a decisive role in children's oral language development. Blount (1982) explained that parents interact with their children in regular and systematic ways through speech throughout their developmental age span. First, children acquire most of their

vocabulary through oral exchanges with parents. Second, parental speech facilitates children's perception of speech and consequently their comprehension of it. Third, it facilitates children's communicative competence (Blount, 1982). As shown in Blount's (1982) study of English/Spanish families, gender also influences how children's oral language develops, but this is a theme that was not particularly significant for this study.

Different from oral language that is acquired spontaneously and non-consciously through interaction, signs of writing and their uses are acquired consciously and voluntarily (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 183). Family members' experiences with print are both a personal and a social construct. Children construct their knowledge about print and their strategies for reading and writing through their independent explorations of written language, from interactions with parents and other literate people, and from their observations of others engaged in literacy activities (D. Taylor, 1986; Teale & Sulzby, 1989). Parents play a major role in the formation of children's conceptions of print and its uses through storybook reading. Children's reading performance has shown to be correlated with "the amount of reading done by their parents, the quality of parents' material, and the value placed on reading by parents" (Hess, Holloway, Price, & Dickson, 1982, p. 93).

Children can learn many things from reading: vocabulary, rhyme, and structures of stories, meta-linguistics, and so on. Cognitively, the value of reading for children has been recognised on two levels. First, book reading is a social activity between parents and children at home. The attention to interaction during

reading has led to recognition of the potential cognitive and linguistic richness of talk between parents and children during book reading; it has also led to the realization that, just as happens with language learning, effective parents change the demands they place on children as they mature (Dickinson, 1994, p. 3).

Second, reading is children's personal solitary exploration. Snow and Ninio's (1986) work shows that "the terms of the basic meta-contract concerning the nature of books and book-input are identical in solitary and in social reading" (p. 122). Children learn rules of literacy from their interaction with books. For example, children establish at least six concepts about print during their joint picture-book reading with their parents. These concepts include books are for reading, not for manipulating; pictures are not things but representations of things; pictures are for naming; pictures, though static, can represent events; books constitute an autonomous fictional world; and in book reading, the book is in control and the reader is led (Snow & Ninio, 1986).

In addition, what needs to be pointed out is that, though the above review is based on literacy values of Eurocentric, middle-class families, the assistance that adults provide their children's language learning at home is similar to the literacy practices of urban, middle-class families in contemporary China (X. Li, 1996; D. Lu, 1998; Xu, 1998). However, these literacy practices are only one of the many ways that literacy values of first language are transmitted, as the values and beliefs of literacy vary in different cultures, and even within the same culture. For example, in contemporary China, two factors influence the literacy practices at home: a) urban and rural differences, and b) parental educational

levels (Parry, 1998). In rural China, many parents do not have much schooling themselves; they do not have much time for their children after intensive farming; and their limited income does not allow them to buy books or toys for their children. Therefore, their children may have less modeling through book reading and less direct instruction regarding language use than their urban counterparts (W. Lu, 1998; Zhu, 1998). These within-cultural differences also exist in the same ethnic groups in Canada. For example, adult-child oral communication may be common, but parental modeling through book-reading and direct instruction may not be so in some Chinese families in Canada, because parental modeling through book reading and direct instruction on vocabulary and appropriate use of language to a large extent is affected by parents' educational background. In the present study, the parents' educational background is a significant factor in understanding the home literacy practices.

Literacy Acquisition in Second Language

In this study, literacy acquisition practices apply to both adult and child learners in immigrant families, when both adults and children are learning English as a second language. (Children may be developing their first-language literacy at the same time). For first-language literacy learning, parental modeling may be crucial, but in English as second-language learning, the role of scaffolding may be mutual between adults and children: children who learn a language faster may be able to support their parents' language learning, and vice versa.

After a careful examination of the evidence for qualitative and quantitative similarities and differences between child and adult second-language acquisition, Hakuta (1986) concluded that except for some minor differences (e.g. accent and grammar), adults and children learn a second language in similar ways.

Research in the past few decades has shown that learners use many similar strategies in language learning, whether they are small children learning their first language or children or adults learning a second language (Spangenberg-Urbschat & Pritchard, 1994; Urzua, 1980). However, it is widely recognized that children learn a second language much faster than adults do. There are four factors to account for the facility of children in second-language learning: a) a difference in cognitive processing; b) exposure to the natural language learning process; c) lack of language concepts; and d) fewer problems with affective filters (Perez, 1995, p. 338).

Based on these research findings, I have concluded that in bi-lingual and bi-cultural families, the scaffolding between parent and child can be reciprocal regarding their use of different languages. In first-language literacy acquisition, parents act as a language scaffold to support children's learning, while in English as a second-language acquisition, it is more likely the case that children help parents acquire literacy at home. In these families, children may not have the same support for English literacy development from their parents as their peers who are from English as first language families. Recent research on linguistic minority children who brokered for their limited-English-speaking parents (McQuillan & Tse, 1995) and limited-English-proficient parents' involvement with

their children's language acquisition (P. Liu, 1996) further confirms this conclusion. In this research study, I examine not only the children's literacy acquisition and learning from the parents, but also the scaffolding that the children provide for the parents' learning experiences.

Home Environment and Literacy Development

Home environment influences on literacy learning and development have received widespread attention in literacy research. As stated earlier, home environments constitute two dimensions of family milieu – social as well as physical. Research has revealed that the number of children in the family, spacing between children, birth order, the number of books in the family, socio-economic status, and the educational level of parents are important factors that influence children's literacy development (McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1982; Spreadbury, 1994; Teale, 1986).

McGillicuddy-DeLisi's (1982) study of family environment and parental beliefs indicates that the number of children in a family influences parents' practices in teaching strategies. For example, parents of an only child as compared with parents of more than one child believed that direct instruction from adults is a process through which the child learns concepts. Even in families with more than one child, parents provided less direct instruction to the second-born than to the first-born. Parents with fewer children spent more time with children around home literacy activities than did parents with more children. Research finds that the smaller the family, the greater the percentage of good

readers; the earlier children are in the ordinal position in the family, the higher the percentage of good readers (Spreadbury, 1994, p. 15). This difference may have some implications for the literacy practices in Chinese immigrant families. Many recent immigrant families accustomed to the one-child policy in China tend not to have more than one child per family even after they immigrate to Canada. Yet many Chinese immigrant couples who start their families in Canada tend to have more than one child. The number of children in the family and the order of the child in the family may affect the home literacy practices of the children.

To better illustrate the influences of family environment on children's learning and the parents' role in the children's literacy development at home, I used Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural capital and Coleman's (1988, 1990, 1991) theory of family capital as a framework for my interpretation of the family environment and literacy development among the four families. Bourdieu (1977) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) maintain that individual family members acquire and accumulate cultural resources that can be activated in cultural capital that provides social advantages and educational success. Although all people possess certain cultural resources, how cultural resources are activated into cultural capital differs contextually from person to person and from family to family (Lareau, 1989). Building on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, Coleman has extended conventional measurement of the socio-economic standing of the family to include the component of social capital. Social capital refers to the social resources in the family and in the community that are accessible by the family, and serves as a valuable cognitive and knowledge asset available to

members of the family (Coleman, 1990). In Coleman's theory, the three distinct components of family background -- physical capital or financial capital, human capital, and social capital -- are interrelated and should be dealt with interdependently. Physical capital refers to the material resources that can be measured by family income and wealth. Human capital is the individual's level of educational attainment that is embodied in a person's knowledge, skills, and capabilities to act in certain social structures. Social capital is the network of social relationships that exist in the family or between the family and the community. Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) further differentiated the social relationships in the family as within-family social capital and those in the community as between-family social capital.

The three forms of family capital, physical, human, and social capital, together reflect the quality of children's home environment, and are important for children's literacy development. That is, the three forms of capital are important for the families' activation and accumulation of cultural capital that are beneficial for their children's educational success. However, social capital is central in the theory of family capital as it "facilitates and enhances the conversion of other forms of family capital into children's human capital" (Wong, 1998, p. 4). Other forms of family capital such as physical or financial capital and parental human capital are irrelevant to children's educational development if they are not culminated by social relations in the family. That is, only when parents use their economic and human capital effectively as resources in their parental roles does the presence of other forms of capital become significant to their children's

educational attainment. Therefore, it is social capital, not human capital or financial capital, that determines whether a family environment will have positive impact on children's educational outcomes and social behaviors (Wong, 1998, p. 5).

In a positive home literacy environment, the accessibility of print is an important factor that influences children's literacy habits. Print is the medium through which children learn to master their surroundings (D. Taylor, 1983, p. 53). Spreadbury (1994) has argued that the home environment, especially the availability of literary materials in the home, has a marked effect on children's attitude to reading. Literacy materials are not confined to books, but also include environmental print such as product labels, tags, signs, and adult reading materials. Both the quantity and quality of literacy material are important (Teale, 1986). That is, the appropriateness of the print materials matters. A rich, healthy home literacy environment facilitates children's positive attitude not only towards reading but also writing. Spreadbury (1994) concluded that there are four factors that constitute a positive home literacy environment: a) availability and range of printed materials in the environment; b) reading being "done" in the environment; c) an environment facilitating contact with paper and pencil (reading and writing); d) responses by others such as encouragement, providing feedback, and helping in the environment (p. 18).

The studies of Heath (1983) and D. Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) demonstrate that physical capital does not determine what the families can do with literacy. In D. Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines' study of the Shay Avenue families,

for example, although the children from these families were living in urban poverty, they were practising literacy in many different ways, and they were growing up literate. These studies suggest that different families and communities are using literacy in many ways regardless of their socio-economic status.

Parents' human capital, especially that of mothers, is also an important factor that affects home literacy environment. D. Taylor (1983) pointed out that the interplay of individual biographies and educative styles of parents becomes the dominant factor in shaping the literate experiences of children within the home (p. 23). Parents with little educational background may have high aspirations for children's literacy achievements just as parents of higher education levels do. However, their education level may restrict their involvement in literacy activities with their children at home (Liu, 1996). Parents of different educational backgrounds have different beliefs and use different teaching strategies in child rearing. McGillicuddy-DeLisi (1982) reported that parents from higher education and income groups differ from lower education and income parents in that they exhibited:

- 1) positive feedback more often than working-class parents
- 2) readiness more often than working-class parents
- 3) consciousness of structures inherent in the environment more often than working-class parents
- 4) awareness of stages of development more often than working-class parents

5) direct instruction less often than working-class parents

6) confidence in their beliefs more often than working-class parents. (p. 275)

In a study of Icelandic families' literacy practices, R. L. Taylor (1995) indicated that families of mothers with higher education appear to encourage more regular shared family activities related to literacy, in practical reading, in shared reading, in support of school, and in reduced television use than families of mothers with lower education. These family practices that are functioning in association with family human capital significantly influence social relations among the family members, and hence, influence the families' cultural capital generation and accumulation. In this study, I have analyzed all four forms of family capital in my interpretation of the home literacy practices.

Summary

Literacy as a way of living shapes the everyday lives of families. Families construct their cultural experiences through all kinds of literacy activities. These literacy activities, in turn, serve their personal, social, occupational, and economic needs.

The family provides an intellectual developmental environment for both adults and children. Snow et al. (1991)'s profile of the "family as educators", which includes five components, are important in this research on home literacy practices. These components are opportunities to learn, parental direct teaching, parental education, parental expectations, and home literacy environment. In the

family, parents can promote literacy development through direct instruction or through providing vicarious opportunities for children's literacy learning. In children's early literacy development, parent-child oral interaction is considered crucial to children's oral language development. Parent-child book reading is not only a good way to develop children's oral language, but also beneficial for fostering children's conceptions of print. Home environment, both physical and social, is also of great significance to home literacy acquisition. The size of the family, the number of good books in the family, parents' socio-economic status, and educational level are all important factors that shape the family's literacy life.

This review of literature has provided a theoretical framework for my research on the families in this study. Influenced by Bhola's (1996) model on home literacy practices, I have focused on the family as a whole and at the same time highlighted the individual focal child in each family as interdependent in my research. I have looked at the children's families as a cultural setting that has not only the characteristics of ordinary nuclear families, but also a distinctly different nature from many families that live in their own cultures. When the families came to live in Canadian society as immigrants, they brought with them the cultural values from their home country China. Their immigrant status also gave them a different perspective on their education and economic future in Canada. The focal children who are growing up in these families experience the Chinese ways of literacy that are different from the literacy practices in Canadian schools they attended. Since different practices are embodied in the socialization patterns among family members that are essential for learning and development, I have

focused this dissertation on the activities and interactions among the children and their family members, especially their parents, who have had a strong influence on who they are and who they are becoming.

This literature review has also presented my understanding of home literacy practices throughout the research process. I have defined literacy as a socio-cultural practice, a way of living and making sense of the world (Langer, 1987; Street, 1993). Within this definition, I have included many forms of literacy practices in this research, such as reading, writing, oracy, listening, drawing, and audio-visual media. My conception of a literate person in a Canadian society is one who is literate in either one's first language or second language (in this study, either Chinese or English). Viewing literacy as a social practice, I have also looked at the socio-cultural contexts of the families' literacy practices and the larger society in which they reside. The four focal children's daily activities, what they do and experience in a cross-cultural context, and how their parents support their literacy learning in their intersecting worlds of home, school, and community have been the core of my research. Specifically, this study investigates the nature of literacy practices outside school in the home settings of immigrant children's families, and the interweaving relationships between literacy and culture in the home literacy practices of these families.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of my research is to gain understanding of the literacy and cultural practices of four Chinese immigrant families in Canada through the literacy acquisition experiences of four focal children. To gain such understanding, I acquired a thorough knowledge of the daily lives of these immigrant families: their beliefs and worldviews, and the way they construct and reconstruct their socio-cultural lives through literacy. Determined by the nature of the research topic, I chose ethnography, the art and science of discovering and describing a group or culture (Spradley, 1980; Fetterman, 1989), as the methodology for my study. This chapter is divided into two parts. In part one, which contains three sections, I have outlined the rationale for choosing ethnography as my research method, illustrated my background as a researcher, and described the procedures for the conduct of the study: participant selection, time line, data collection, data analysis, and research ethics. In this section, I have also included a brief review of the pilot study I conducted from January 1998 to March 1998. In part two, I have introduced the four families before I present their stories in the following chapters.

Methodological Issues

In this section, I have presented some basic understandings for this study: my rationale for choosing ethnography, my cultural identity and beliefs as a researcher in the research process, and the procedure for the conduct of this study. This information will provide the reader with some of the assumptions that pertain to my research.

Ethnography as Methodology

Gall, Borg, & Gall (1996) state that "[no] other research tradition matches the ability of ethnography to investigate the complex phenomenon known as culture" (p. 617). With my focus on the complexity of literacy and culture within families and society, I found that ethnography was the most compatible method with the purpose of my research. The intent of my study was to document and understand literacy and cultural practices within the home milieu of four Chinese immigrant families in Canada, by considering, the experiences of four focal children. In this study, I have explored the four Chinese immigrant families' beliefs and uses of literacy in their new home in Canada. I have also described the language and literacy acquisition environment in the home milieu to gain an understanding of the bi-literacy and bi-cultural practices in the families as they experienced cultural transition and adjustment in Canada. Such exploration is the goal of ethnography – to discover and describe the culture of a particular group in a particular context at a particular time.

At the ontological level, I concur with the worldview that social reality is constructed dynamically by the group, shared and negotiated by individuals in the group, and local and specific to that group. In my opinion, social reality is constructed and shared by members of the family as a whole and negotiated through individuals who are an inseparable part of the family. This social reality can be observed, understood, and learned within the group and across groups. Therefore, as a researcher, I am able to conduct the research to observe the four focal children within their home milieu.

At the epistemological level, I share the worldview that reality and culture become known through learning and interpretation. My goal in discovering and describing the process of immigrant families' literacy and cultural practices is to understand their socio-cultural experiences and at the same time make these experiences understood by others. That is, I aim to depict the meanings that are associated with their daily literacy lives.

Methodologically, ethnography, characterized by prolonged engagement with the culture under study, has enabled me to have firsthand experience with the families in my study. It was the best way for me to take both an etic and an emic point of view of the literacy-culture lives of the families, by "being there" with them. Being with the family and observing them allowed me to have a holistic view of the families' daily living and their way of constructing reality. Also, through ethnographic interviewing, I was able to understand the family members' point of view, their visions of the world, and beliefs and values about literacy and living. Other ethnographic methods, such as taking field notes and

collecting documents and artifacts, enabled me to elicit the tacit culture of the family and to be aware of the "unknown" territory of the world I saw. In sum, the multi-dimensional methods of ethnography not only allowed me to fulfill my goal to discover and describe the behaviors, values, and tangible aspects of their culture, and presented the culture from an insider's perspective, but also enabled me to understand the lives and experiences of the families' social-cultural contexts.

Lastly, drawing from the literature on literacy and culture research, many researchers have documented the importance of doing ethnography of literacy, schooling, and living. Their research has shown that ethnography is an important tool to explore and study educational phenomena both in school settings and beyond (i.e. community and homes). Among many of the studies, Heath (1983) studied the literacy practices of four communities in their socio-cultural and linguistic contexts; Taylor (1983) studied six middle-class children's literacy practices in family contexts; Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) described literacy experiences of inner-city black families; and Fishman (1988) described the literacy of an Amish family and their community. These ethnographic studies, which have contributed significantly to the knowledge and theory of literacy learning and provided important insights in how literacy is viewed, acquired, and applied in society, have demonstrated that ethnography is an effective and powerful method for literacy research. My study, which has focused on four focal Chinese children through an ethnographic lens, has

followed the footprints of these ethnographers of literacy, and enriches the existing literature.

Background of Researcher

The epistemology of ethnography (the relationship between the knower or would-be-knower and the reality) is subjective. That is, "the investigator and the objects of investigation are interactively linked so that the 'findings' are *'literally created'* as the investigation proceeds" (italics in original, Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). In ethnography, the researcher and the researched are linked interactively through fieldwork; the literally-created findings are the ethnographic accounts that document the multiple realities. The multiple realities are part of the field being described and reconstructed/reproduced and some portion of the world observed and interpreted as culture itself is not visible, but is made visible through its representation (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Hammersley, 1992; Van Maanen, 1988).

Ethnography is not only an art of discovering and describing a culture but also a personal meaning-making process for the ethnographer. It is "highly particular and hauntingly personal" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. ix). To understand another's culture, it is crucial for an ethnographer to understand her/himself first. Agar (1980) has suggested that an ethnographer should be concerned with his/her own personality and cultural background because "the ethnographer's background is the initial framework against which similarities and differences in the studied group are assessed" (p. 43).

I am a female Chinese in my late-twenties, born and educated in the late 20th century in central China under the Communist ideology in a Confucian society, now pursuing a Ph.D. degree in Education at a Canadian university. I came to Canada three years ago. I speak two Chinese dialects, standard Chinese (Mandarin), English, and a little Japanese. I can read and write in these languages. Having lived for over twenty years and been educated in a linguistically divergent country, I gradually learned that the world is constituted of multiple realities that are dynamically constructed by people of a social group or culture, shared and negotiated by individuals and the group and across groups; and that language is the marker or cultural indicator of these shared or individually constructed territories. I speak Xishui dialect with my family, relatives, and friends who live in Xishui County; I speak Wuhan dialect with my friends and colleagues from Wuhan city; I speak standard Chinese in school to communicate with my Chinese classmates, professors, and colleagues; I communicate in English in English classrooms with classmates and professors, and with my friends from other cultures. For academic purposes during my school years, I read and wrote in both Chinese and English. I assumed different in-group identities when I traveled back and forth among these territories: the use of Xishui dialect embodies my rural origin; Wuhan dialect reveals my urbanization and urbanity; standard Chinese and English symbolize my education.

However, my identity in China mediated by use of different languages or dialects is largely geographic rather than ethnic, because Chinese society is

rather homogeneous. In multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Canada, language and literacy are an embodiment of the nexus of a particular ethnic group or culture. The multiple realities or territories are no longer geographic or linguistic, but ethnic. For me, no matter in which territory I now live or what language I speak, I am Chinese in a Canadian context.

My experiences have nurtured my view of reality, of literacy and its use as a socio-cultural construct. I believe that the outcomes of an individual's literacy learning and uses are shaped by the social contexts in which the learning and uses of literacy are embedded and can be fully understood only in relation to these social contexts (Langer, 1987). The social context as culture or subculture is the system of knowledge which people use to construct and understand behavior and discover how they and others act and interpret the world. Human interpretations derive from social interactions between the members of a shared culture and are interpreted through modifications and negotiation within the contexts of their lives (Spradley, 1990; Spradley & McCurdy, 1990). Therefore, I have looked at the literacy experiences of the four focal children as social construction and negotiation with their significant others within the socio-cultural contexts of their homes.

My cross-cultural background also gave me a unique position in this research. My ability to speak Chinese and my background as a Chinese person in Canada have created a common bond between my participating families and myself. The common bond has also allowed me to enter their homes and to learn about their lives and their beliefs and thoughts. Also, my

experiences in both China and Canada influenced how I have viewed literacy in the families, and how I have interpreted the literacy and living of the four children and their families.

Ethnography in Action

With ethnography in action, the researcher describes and understands culture from an insider's point of view (Jacob, 1987; Spradley, 1990; Wolcott, 1995). The procedure of doing ethnographic research involves identifying a research project, selecting participants and sites, seeking ethics approval from the University, gaining entry, collecting data, analyzing data, and lastly, writing an ethnographic report (Spradley, 1979, 1980; Wolcott, 1995). In this section, I describe the methodological procedures, including participant selection, study time line, data collection, data analysis techniques, ethics approval, and a pilot study.

Participant Selection

Because my purpose was to explore the bi-literacy and bi-cultural experiences of immigrant families, it was crucial for me to understand what family members do, what they say, and what they think. For linguistic and cultural considerations, I chose four Chinese immigrant families as the participants of my study. On one hand, I was culturally one of them, an insider; on the other hand, as a researcher, I was an observer, an outsider. Being a Chinese and English bi-lingual speaker, I was able to enter the worlds of the

participants, and discover the meaning of those worlds. Therefore, I have the capacity to develop an empathic understanding of the participants and emic perspective of their lives.

I selected four Chinese families for my ethnography. I looked for families that had the following characteristics:

- The family came from the People's Republic of China at least one year ago.
- In the family, one or both parents are working.
- The family has at least one child, preferably in elementary school, who will be the focal child for my study
- The first language of the home is Chinese with English being their second language.

Two families were selected through the Chinese Students' and Scholars' Association (CSSA), where I was VP-External and had close contact with Chinese graduate students' families. The fathers in these two families were graduate students attending the University. For the purpose of this study, I called these two families academic families. Another two families were selected through a larger educational research project on immigrants in schools conducted under the aegis of the Prairie Center of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration (PCERII), University of Alberta <<http://pcerii.metropolis.net/research-policy/educa.html>>. These two families owned restaurants in downtown Saskatoon. I called these two families entrepreneurial families. For each family, I chose one child who became the

focus for my study, that is, I have presented the phenomenon of home literacy from their perspective. In my study, I have referred to these participants as the focal children.

Data Collection

In order to get data to reflect the socio-cultural practices of literacy within the home milieu, I used a variety of ethnographic methods: participant observation, interviews, field notes, document and artifact collection. The study was conducted during the months of September 1998 to May 1999. I visited each family once a week, with each visit being three to four hours.

The original intent of this research included observations of the four children in both their home and classroom settings. Because I failed to gain entry to the schools the children attended, I revisited my research questions and focus. As a result, I conducted my data collection only in the home milieu of the children's families.

Observations. Observation took place in different settings such as the home, parks, the participants' restaurants, in participants' research labs, in public libraries, and shopping centers, and during a variety of occasions such as casual visits, family dinners, family outings, and reunions. To get an insider's point of view, I assumed the role of a participant observer. My role as a researcher was the active-member-researcher (assuming responsibilities but not fully committing to members' values and goals) and the peripheral-

member-researcher (accepted as an insider, but not participating in what insiders do) (Adler & Adler, 1994). I took part in the families' activities and interactions during my observations.

Following Spradley's (1980) process of observation. I started from descriptive observations to focused observations, and then moved to selected observations. Descriptive observations included gathering information in response to describing social situations such as space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal, and feeling in the home milieu of the families. I also included my actions, thoughts, and feelings in the social situations. After I was familiar with the families, I began to direct my ethnographic focus to the home-school connection. This focus entailed a few related domains such as the families' socialization patterns and engagement with media. The focus allowed me to achieve in-depth understanding of the cultural context. In the last stage as the typology of the domains began to emerge, I began an in-depth analysis of the domains of my ethnographic focus.

Ethnographic interview. Interviewing is another important method to get data, especially the insiders' point of view. General types of interviewing include informal, conversational interviewing and formal interviewing such as structured, semi-structured, and focus group interviewing. Informal or conversational interviewing includes "a variety of kinds of talk that the ethnographer engages in such as information about daily routine and life history" (Agar, 1980, p. 105). As I needed to listen to their voices – what they

have to say about their activities, their feelings, and their lives (Eisner, 1991), I used informal, conversational interviewing throughout the process of my research, especially during early dialogues. I asked the family members, including the children, informal questions during our interactions and activities. The parents, especially mothers, became my key informants, discussing with me many topics or issues about their children. Much of the data were provided by the mothers when we were busy in their kitchens or through social chatting.

Among the formal interviews, I used mainly semi-structured (i.e. open-ended) interviewing (See Appendix D). The benefit of semi-structured interviewing was that it allowed my participants to have enough space to interpret the questions asked and elicit their opinions freely, and at the same time it allowed me to have some control over the flow of the topic. The interviews with the parents selected through CSSA (the academic families) were conducted at their homes and were audio-taped. The interviews with the parents selected through PCERII project (the entrepreneurial families) were conducted in their restaurants and were mostly recorded by taking notes. I tried semi-structured interviews with the two children in the academic families (See Appendix E). Neither went well because it was difficult for the young children to stay on topic. Therefore, I did not interview the children in the two entrepreneurial families. As it was difficult to get the families together due to their busy schedules, I did not use focus group interviewing in this study. All interviews were conducted in Chinese, transcribed, and translated into English.

Field notes and journals. Field notes and journals were considered important in my fieldwork. Field notes were the core of my data as they were "the record of an ethnographer's observations, conversations, interpretations, and suggestions for further information to be gathered" (Agar, 1980, p. 112). I took two types of notes – descriptive and analytical (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Descriptive notes recorded details of settings, activities, or events to portray the context of my observations. Analytical notes were reflective notes about my feelings, problems, ideas, or impressions. Field notes were of great importance to my research. First, they served as working notes a) to record ideas from my observation, b) to follow up interviews or observations/questions that came from the interviews, and c) to record things that I had noticed during the fieldwork. Second, field notes served as a knot that tied me as researcher and the field work between worlds of home and field, field worker and insiders, experience and representation, between field notes and self, and self and others, and between written and taped words, and ciphers or other symbols (Jackson, 1995).

Document and artifact collection. I have also used document and artifact collection in my research. Although drawing inference from physical evidence is considered important during observation, not many researchers discuss the importance of collecting documents and artifacts. Fetterman (1989) argued that in literate societies, written documents and artifacts or other forms of physical evidence such as photographs are important, valuable, and

timesaving forms of data collection. These documents and artifacts usually are important expressions of the tacit culture of an individual or a particular group. Hodder (1992) suggested that documents and artifacts are "mute" evidence; they can be material expressions of power and resistance, conflict and conformity of the members of a culture; "[m]aterial culture is thus *necessary* for most social constructions" (italics in original, p. 395). In this research, I collected letters received by my participants, their writing and drawing samples, crafts by participants, and documents and newsletters from schools. Some of the samples were used in the data presentation. These documents and artifacts were important sources for understanding my participants, but they were not analyzed individually in this dissertation.

Data Analysis

As an important product of ethnographic fieldwork is a report, it is critical for ethnographers to transform qualitative data into an intelligible account (Wolcott, 1994). Data analysis in my ethnography was a continuous and developmental process that was parallel with data collection. Huberman and Miles' (1992, 1994) data management techniques were used to organize the data. For example, I employed matrices to display the complex data of the four different families -- a technique suggested for exploring and describing multiple sites in qualitative research. I also followed Huberman and Miles' data analysis methods and used coding and thematic analysis as my major data analysis methods.

Data management and analysis are an art as well as a science.

Huberman and Miles (1992, 1994) advise that to ensure high-quality and accessible data, it is important to process the data at an early stage. In their opinion, the way data are stored and retrieved is the heart of data management (p. 430). I used three methods -- data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification -- to manage data during the analysis. With data reduction, the whole range of data was reduced in an anticipatory way through coding, finding themes, clustering, and writing stories. Four themes were identified from this process. The themes were displayed through an organized and compressed assembly of information that permits the drawing of conclusions. Similar events, activities, interactions, and experiences were grouped together under each theme. Finally, I drew conclusions and verifications through summarizing my own experiences and integrating my personal interpretation into the themes.

Ethical Considerations

I adhered to the guidelines for ethical research with human subjects in the behavioral sciences as determined by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and adopted by the University of Saskatchewan. Prior to the study, ethics approval of this study was granted by the University Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioral Science Research at the University of Saskatchewan. After approval was granted, I informed the participants in writing of the purpose of my study, tasks to be performed, significance of the

study, possible inconvenience, and their participant rights. All letters to the families were translated into Chinese. Both Chinese and English versions were provided to the participants. (Both English and Chinese versions of these letters are included in the appendix of this dissertation). The following guidelines were emphasized:

1. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained throughout the research from the beginning of data collection, to the data release, and report presentation stage.
2. Participation was voluntary. Participants had the right and freedom to withdraw at any time from the study and withhold my access to the information collected from the interviews, field observations, and other data sources.
3. All data in the form of transcripts and field notes would be securely stored and retained for a minimum of five years at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.
4. Each participant was asked to sign four copies of the agreement. The participant and I each kept a copy (see Appendix B, C).
5. All transcripts of interviews and field observation notes were returned to the participants to check for accuracy of transcription and interpretation. A data release consent was obtained from the participants (see Appendix F).

The Pilot Study

Before engaging in the ethnographic study, I conducted a pilot study to test procedures planned for my main study. This pilot study provided many

insights into procedures necessary for my study. From January through March, 1998, I conducted a pilot study on literacy-cultural practices in a Filipino immigrant family in Saskatoon. My reasons for conducting the pilot study were to: a) apply and test ethnographic techniques that I was going to use for my dissertation research; b) test the theory of doing ethnography of literacy and culture and to get firsthand experience of doing ethnographic research; and c) identify themes and possible aspects that I needed to focus on for my dissertation research. The results of the pilot study demonstrate that I have achieved these goals. (See Appendix A for detailed report on the pilot study.)

Summary

I chose an ethnographic approach to conduct my study, the most appropriate approach for me to gain an understanding of how immigrant families construct their literacy experiences around language and culture in their homes. To the Chinese immigrant families I worked with, my position as a Chinese graduate student living in Canada was as an insider as well as an outsider. The similarities between their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and mine allowed me to have an etic (outsider) as well as an emic (insider) perspective on their literacy and living. I used a variety of data collection and analysis techniques including those I used in my pilot study. These data collection techniques included observation, participant observation, interviewing, field-notes, journal writing, and document and artifact collection. Various data management skills such as data reduction, data display,

conclusion drawing, and verification were used to manage data. Coding, thematic analysis, and comparative analysis were the methods for data analysis.

Before the Stories:

Introduction to the Families and the City

In this section, I have presented a brief introduction to the four families, described the city they live in to provide a socio-cultural and socio-geographic context for the families' unfolding stories, and explained the ways the stories are told in the chapters that follow.

The Families

The four families in this study are the Zhangs, the Lis, the Lius, and the Yes. (Pseudonyms are used to ensure anonymity of all participants.) The Zhangs and the Lis came to Canada on student visitor visas. In these two families, both husbands came to Canada to study for a graduate degree and their wives and children came later as visitors to join them. Both families decided to change their status to immigrant after living in Canada for a period of time. They are typical one-child families under China's one-child policy and have no relatives in Canada. The Lius and the Yes, on the other hand, came to Canada with immigrant status for economic advancement. Both families have extended families in Canada who helped them immigrate to and later settle in

Canada. Both families have more than one child and all the children were born in Canada.

The City

As the reader prepares to hear the stories, an introduction of the city is necessary for understanding the social context of the families. All four families reside in the prairie city of Saskatoon. It is a medium-size, university city with a population of 216,445 people, predominantly Caucasian and with a growing Aboriginal population of 16,160 (Statistics Canada 1996 Census). A major characteristic of the city is the South Saskatchewan River that runs south-north through the city and divides it into the east and west sides.

The east/west division has not only geographic meaning for this city, but also social and economic significance. The river divides the city more or less into two socio-economic zones. The east side tends to be the advantaged side of the city. The west side, particularly the areas around Chinatown, is the less advantaged, typical of the inner core of large cities. This area is home to many lower income families, immigrants, and First Nations' families. The east side is where many better educated, and more socially advantaged people live; the further east, the more advantaged the neighborhood.

At the centre of the east side is the largest university in the province. The university, one of the leading universities in Canada, is one of the few Canadian universities that charge the same tuition to Canadian and international students at a graduate level. This policy, together with the

University's reputation, has attracted many international students, especially Chinese graduate students from People's Republic of China. Chinese graduate students (127 out of a total 817 international students from over 65 countries at both undergraduate and graduate levels in the 1999-2000 academic year) are the largest single group of international students, comprising approximately thirty percent of enrollment in the College of Graduate Studies and Research. Most of the Chinese graduate students are on university scholarships, research grants, or teaching assistantships. They are well educated, although they are at the bottom of the economic ladder of Canadian society. Most were well respected, middle-class in China, and experienced a status drop after coming to Canada as students (Blunt & G. Li, 1998). Therefore, they are considered as the "border people", living on the margin in terms of socio-economic status, and waiting to join the middle class after they finish their degrees.

Across the river, on the west side, is where many less disadvantaged people live. In the middle of this area is Chinatown, where my two entrepreneurial families lived and worked. This neighborhood is also referred to by the east side people and the rest of the west side people as the "problem area" of the city. Inebriated adults are sometimes seen on the street, unkempt and unsupervised children play on the street. From the outside, many houses look run down and deserted. Walking on the street during the day may not be safe. Groups of three or four youths or adults often stand staring at pedestrians

such as me—a visible minority female. My comfort level in this area was very low.

Most refugees and immigrants settle on the west side. Chinese immigrants who come to Canada for economic reasons settle around the Chinatown area. They often come with the help of relatives who are already in Canada and have their own businesses, usually a restaurant or grocery store. On the west side, rent is cheaper and it is easy to find work in Chinese restaurants. Most Chinese immigrants started their immigrant lives by working for Chinese restaurants or businesses. They saved money for a few years and then opened their own businesses in the area.

Two of the four families in my study, the Zhangs and the Lis, who came to Canada for academic advancement, live on the east side of the city. The other two families, the Lius and the Yes, who came to Canada for economic advancement, live in the hub of the west side.

How the Stories are Told

In the next two chapters, Chapter Four and Chapter Five, I have presented an account of the home literacy experiences of the four Chinese immigrant families -- the Zhangs, the Lis, the Lius, and the Yes. In Chapter Four, I have told the stories of the academic families, the Zhangs and the Lis, and in Chapter Five, the stories of the entrepreneurial families, the Lius and the Yes.

To better illustrate the literary lives of each family as a whole, I have told the stories with one or two children of the families at the centre of each family story. The focal children are the protagonists of the family stories throughout the dissertation. Each family story begins with a description of what, when, how, and where the families practise literacy, to show the literacy contexts in the home milieu. A description of the literacy practices of the families in association with their communities is then presented to illustrate the social worlds of the families. At the end of each chapter, I have summarized the literacy experiences of the two groups of families and noted the emerging themes.

To emphasize the significance of my findings in home-school links, I have told the stories about the families' understanding of Canadian schools separately in Chapter Six so that the reader can better understand their cultural and educational beliefs and their perceptions of and encounters with Canadian schools.

Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation to ensure the anonymity of the participants. I chose names to reflect the authenticity of the families' literacy practices. In the two academic families, I used Chinese pseudonyms because the families strongly opposed the use of English names and preferred to use their original names in Canada. In the two entrepreneurial families, I used English pseudonyms because in these two families, although everyone has a Chinese name as well as an English name, they seldom use their Chinese names; mostly they use their English names.

In a legal sense, the children in the academic families are considered immigrant children because they were born in China and came to Canada as dependents; the children in the two entrepreneurial families are children of immigrants as they were born in Canada. In this dissertation, the terms “immigrant children” and “children of immigrants” are used inter-changeably.

With this background knowledge, I have provided the context for my study. In the next chapter, I tell the stories of the Zhangs and the Lis, the two academic families. Theirs is a story of high educational expectation and cultural tension.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERACY IN THE ACADEMIC FAMILIES: THE ZHANGS AND THE LIS

The stories unfolding in this chapter are the literacy experiences in the home milieu of the two academic families. This chapter provides an understanding of what, when, and where the two focal children in these two families read and wrote, a description of what the home literacy environments and social worlds were like, what the parents' educational backgrounds and cultural beliefs were, and how the parents supported their children's learning.

Literacy at Home: What it Is and What it Means

In this section, I have described the literacy practices of Yue Zhang and Yang Li in their homes, including their home literacy environment, daily literacy experiences, and social worlds. Yue and Yang are elementary students who are successful with school, but have to negotiate between home and school lives.

Yue Zhang and Her Family

Yue Zhang, a grade two student, came to Canada two and a half years ago with her mother to join her father, who was doing post-doctoral work at the University of Saskatchewan. Her mother Wang-ling, a former librarian in China,

now works as a sewing factory worker. Her father Zhang-bo finished his post-doctoral studies a year ago and because he could not find a job in his area, he is taking an undergraduate program in computer science. Here is a profile of Yue Zhang and her family:

The Zhang Family

Family Members	Age	Previous Occupation	Current Occupation	Education Level	Years in Canada
Zhang, Bo (Father)	38	Associate Professor	Undergrad student	Post-doc, Canada	3
Wang, Ling (Mother)	32	Librarian	Sewing Factory Worker	B.A. China	2.5
Zhang, Yue (Daughter)	7	School Student	School Student	Grade 2 Canada	2.5

Seven-year-old Yue likes to wear pretty dresses and play with dolls and stuffed animals. Born in Beijing, she came to Canada when she was five with her mother Wang-ling. She still remembers her grandparents and their backyard and her kindergarten years in China.

Yue's parents did not change her Chinese name to an English name as some Chinese families do after immigrating to Canada. Her parents did not coin English names for themselves either. They thought that to keep their original names is important -- their names are a part of who they are. Yue's name has significant meaning to them, especially to Yue's father Zhang-bo who, before Yue was born, dreamed about his father, whom he highly respected and loved, and named their child "Yue", which means "beautiful music" in Chinese.

Yue and her parents live in a two-bedroom apartment ten minutes' drive from the University. Their apartment, similar to what they had in China, is spacious, simple, with everything they need. The living room, where most of the family activities take place, is separated from the kitchen by a wall. On one side of the living room sits Yue's piano. Beside the piano in the corner is a fairly new computer. Beside the computer, along the wall, is a long sofa and facing the sofa against the wall that separates the kitchen and the living room is a TV stand with a TV and a VCR below. Between the sofa and the TV stand is a coffee table, piled with Yue's drawings, books, and toys. Along the outside wall is another sofa and a small bookshelf full of dictionaries and books. It is obvious that this is a family that likes books. I see books, pencils, and paper everywhere.

On a typical day, Yue wakes up around 6:00 am and watches cartoons on TV before she awakens her father. She likes *CBC Playground*, *Bugs Bunny*, *Winnie the Pooh*, and *The Simpsons* the best. She thinks that on *CBC Playground*, the characters Arthur and Rolly Polly are funny. She can not watch *Winnie the Pooh* on Saturday any more. She explained to me on a dental clinic trip, it is "because I have piano lesson from 10:30 to 11:00. My dad drives us to my teacher's house and picks us up and we go to Superstore." "So do you miss it?" I asked. "Yeah, sometimes. But I like playing piano, and shopping is fun too", she replied.

Sometimes she prepares breakfast for her father and herself after her mother goes to work. She wakes her father, they have breakfast together, then

her father takes her to school. After school, she goes to daycare and plays with other children until her father comes from the University to pick her up.

They usually get home about 4:30 p.m. Her mom is home cooking dinner. Yue stays home watching videos and cartoons borrowed from the public library or taped from TV programs such as her favorite show *Sailor Moon*, which her father taped from a TV show. Shaking his head, her father comments that she has probably watched this movie more than 50 times, "I don't understand why she still watches it after so many times!" Sometimes she goes outside to play with the Chinese children whose families live upstairs, but just for a short while. Her mother has told her that other people are busy and have to work the next day, so it is not good to disturb them. She has a new way to amuse herself -- playing games on the computer. She is very good at the poker game, playing for about half an hour to an hour at a time. Now she moves to a new motorcycle race game, which her mother also plays sometimes.

After supper, she usually does the homework her mother asks her to do. Her mother helps her with two of her weaknesses: spelling and math. Yue takes the word list from school and her mother helps her with dictation (see Figures 2 and 3). Sometimes she recites and writes the short stories verbatim. If she does not know some of the words, she leaves them blank and goes back to the books to check the correct spelling, then underlines those words so that she will remember them next time (see Figures 4 and 5). Because she has

...a duck has an egg
 One cat is in a tree
 the dog has a bone
 Sun tree rake can seed
 The sun is up
 can you fix the rice
 a bug can go in the can
 I am plant

Figure 2. A sample of Yue's dictation work supervised by her mother. This kind of dictation, which requires a student to make sentences with individual words, is common in Chinese schools.

her very he will make
 good with went here off
 have today from very nice
 for was are come they
~~for was are come they~~

Figure 3. A sample of Yue's dictation exercise marked by her mother. This kind of dictation, which focuses on correct spelling of individual words, is another common practice in Chinese schools.

Nov 19th

This is the farmer's wife

she sits in the house.

she drinks tea and listens to the radio.

farmer drink listen radio

Figure 4. Yue recited verbatim *The Farmer's Wife*. The words underlined were the ones she did not know how to spell. She checked the correct spelling and wrote them down at the bottom. Recitation from texts, the most common practice for language learning in Chinese schools, has been the literacy tradition in China for over two thousand years.

Henry Babysits

Henry the Duck was enjoying a quiet day at home when the doorbell rang. it was Henry's friend, Clara, with her baby nephew. would you mind babysitting for my nephew? she asked. Henry was not sure he knew how to babysit. It's easy said Clara. It's my nephew nap time and he'll be fast asleep.

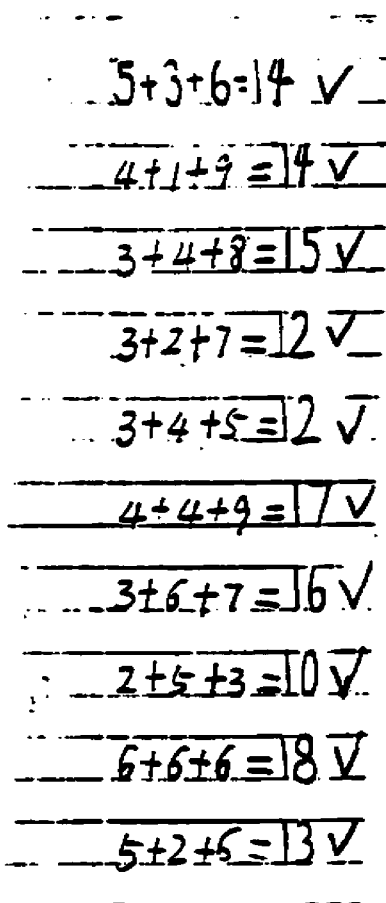
Figure 5. Yue recited verbatim *Henry Babysits*. The words underlined were the ones she did not know how to spell. She checked the correct spelling and wrote them down in the blanks she left.

made some mistakes in math tests at school, her mother makes her do math exercises from a Chinese book or those her mother makes up herself (as shown in Figure 6). When she has no more homework to do, her mother sometimes teaches her Chinese characters (see Figure 7), but mostly she spends the rest of the evening drawing, or playing with her mother or her dolls, and she often gets bored.

On Monday evenings, Yue goes to a Jehovah's Witness Bible study group with her mother. The study group gave her two Biblical books. She studies with another nine-year-old Canadian girl Miranda. She does not like the study. "I learned nothing," she says, "but I like to be there". The study group is a good opportunity for her to leave the apartment and play with other children.

Yue's father Zhang-bo is thirty-eight years old. Born in a small coastal town in southern China, his strong southern accent immediately reveals his origin to other Chinese speakers. He has a typical southern look: medium-build, not very tall, but not short even by Chinese standards, with high cheek bones and heavy eyebrows. He wears a pair of thick glasses, which make him look serious.

Zhang-bo maintains standard Chinese traditions in his home. Whenever there are guests, he seats them and serves tea, a traditional Chinese way of treating guests. Zhang is the youngest of three siblings. He had a harsh childhood. His mother died when he was young, and his father, an old Chinese scholar, became a major influence during his adolescence. Zhang grew up with the traditional Chinese values passed on by his father, and believes in



Handwritten math homework on lined paper. The problems are arranged vertically, each on a new line. Each problem consists of an addition of three numbers followed by an equals sign, a result in a box, and a checkmark. The problems are:

- $5+3+6=14 \checkmark$
- $4+1+9=14 \checkmark$
- $3+4+8=15 \checkmark$
- $3+2+7=12 \checkmark$
- $3+4+5=12 \checkmark$
- $4+4+9=17 \checkmark$
- $3+6+7=16 \checkmark$
- $2+5+3=10 \checkmark$
- $6+6+6=18 \checkmark$
- $5+2+6=13 \checkmark$

Figure 6. Yue's math homework. This math homework is made and corrected by her parents. Chinese people believe that the best way to internalize math formulae is to do a lot of exercises.



Figure 7. Yue's exercise of Chinese characters. In Chinese schools, children do a lot of copying of the same characters to enhance their memory of the correct writing, as well as their calligraphy.

hard work, honesty, and strong family values. He has followed these principles all his life. He went to university, worked through his master's and doctoral degrees, and became an associate professor in a prestigious research institute. In Canada he has finished his post-doctoral program. Though his life in Canada is full of hardship, he still works hard in what he aims to do for his family—to provide them a good life. He also finished his post-doctoral work, and seeing no future in finding a job in his field, he, like many other Chinese graduate students, turned to computer science in an undergraduate program.

Because Zhang-bo's computer studies are very demanding, he spends much of his time reading and studying his textbooks and working on his assignments on the computer. His only leisure reading is the Chinese newspapers on the Internet. He takes breaks from studying and working on his courses by reading Chinese. He stays up many nights to keep up with the courses, but he never complains or thinks of giving up. For him, it is a responsibility to finish the courses and get a job in the area so that his wife and daughter will live a better life.

As a parent, Zhang-bo has a traditional Chinese perspective, wishing to pass on his beliefs to his daughter as his father had to him. He expects her to be disciplined and hard working, and to excel in what she is doing, including academics and extracurricular activities such as piano. Zhang-bo requires her to do well in homework, to practise piano every day, and to be like an adult. But Yue is seven years old, and attends a Canadian school that does not give homework, or put rigorous demands on young students. As a result of

differences in expectation between home and school, there exists a tension between the father and daughter whenever study is mentioned -- the more Zhang-bo asks, the more unhappy Yue gets, and the more often she resists following his teaching.

Yue's mother Wang-ling is six years younger than Zhang-bo and more liberal than he is in terms of parenting. She is the eldest of four siblings and the only girl in her family, born on the prairie of Inner Mongolia and raised in Beijing. Wang-ling can never forget the carefree childhood she had in Inner Mongolia. She likes the simple and unadorned nature of the countryside and the people there. That is the reason eight years ago, against her friends' advice, she married Zhang-bo, a poor, hardworking, sincere, and honest scholar from the countryside. Zhang-bo's harsh childhood and his struggle as a young country boy to get an education deeply moved Wang-ling. Wang-ling told me how she felt at that time, "I swore the day we got married that I would never let him suffer again."

Wang-ling got her university degree in library science from a university in Beijing and later worked as a librarian at another university. Three years ago, she quit her job of nine years and followed her husband to Canada. For the first five months, she stayed home, cooking, cleaning, watching TV, and attended some conversational English classes offered by a Church group through the Open Door Society, and the English classes in the Spouses' Program offered by the International Students Office at the University of Saskatchewan. After they became permanent residents of Canada, she began to work to subsidize their

living expenses, and had to quit those English classes. She chose to work in a sewing factory on the west side of town instead of being a waitress in a Chinese restaurant, which pays better. In a Chinese restaurant she would have to work from 4:00 p.m. to 4:00 am, which meant that she would have had little time to see her daughter and husband. She decided that her family, especially her daughter's education, was important, so she took the sewing factory job. Every morning she gets up at 6:00 a.m., takes the bus to the factory, and works from 7:30 am to 3:30 p.m. At the time this dissertation was written, Zhang-bo was taking computer science courses and no longer received the postdoctoral fellowship, Wang-ling has supported the whole family on her wage. Though it is very hard for her to do manual labor, it is worthwhile for her husband and daughter. They bought a piano for Yue so that she could have piano lessons and practise piano at home. They bought a computer for Zhang-bo so he would not have to stay late at the University to do his homework. Most important of all, Wang-ling believes that their current situation is temporary. After Zhang-bo finishes his courses, he will be able to find a good job.

Wang-ling does most of the cooking and household duties. Every day she comes home from work and prepares dinner while Zhang-bo picks Yue up from day care. After supper, Wang-ling spends time with Yue, supervising her piano, math, or teaching her Chinese. Before going to bed, she gets all their lunches ready for the next day. As a devoted mother and wife, she seldom has time to read for herself. When she has a moment of her own, she tries to read the Bible to study English. There are times when she feels bored with the day-

to-day routines, but her boredom is washed away quickly as she experiences happiness and contentment watching Yue grow happily and her husband work hard for their future. She is always cheerful. The smiles on her tired face always tell me what an exemplary and strong woman she is.

Yue's mother requires Yue to speak Chinese at home to keep her Chinese language. She spends most of her time with her mother studying, playing games, practising piano, or watching TV. Her father is always busy with his university study. Yue loves reading stories in English. She is a good reader with good intonation, expression, and phonetics. When she does not know a word, she is able to pronounce it phonetically. All the certificates she has won from school for book reading are hung on the wall. Having read a hundred books by the end of January, she received another certificate and a pencil from her teacher, which she showed me. On one side of the pencil is inscribed: "You are a winner!" She is really proud of getting the pencil. Her present aim is to read 200 books because one of her classmates had read 200 books.

Yue reads aloud every night before going to sleep. Wang-ling does not read to her, but listens. Wang-ling thinks that her own accent is not good for helping Yue learn English. Yue also has begun to read chapter books, of which she feels proud. "I am reading a chapter book, and I am going to read *Tom Sawyer* soon!" she announced to me one day. But mostly she reads picture books; *The Berenstain Bears* and *The Galloping Ghost* are her favorites. She is especially interested in books that require her to do something. For example, *Shrewbettina's Birthday* is different from other books, since it does not have

words in it, and Yue can tell the birthday story in her own words in English by just looking at the pictures.

Although her bedroom and the living room are always full of books, Yue has very few books of her own. Books are too expensive for her family, and they only purchase necessary books such as dictionaries. Her favorite dictionary, *The Canadian Oxford Picture Dictionary*, has illustrations that are very helpful for the whole family to learn English. For example, they learned the parts of a car through the dictionary. All her English books are secondhand, bought at garage sales in the summer. They do not feel the need to buy new books since they can borrow them from the library. Most of Yue's new books are in Chinese, brought over from China by them or by friends. The Chinese books in the public libraries are printed in old Chinese characters, which are hard even for her parents who are used to simplified Chinese. So they rely on the Internet for Chinese reading materials.

Yue likes weekends when her parents are both at home doing errands with her. They usually spend several hours in the downtown public library searching for books and videos. For Christmas, they borrowed fifty books for Yue from the public library. Sometimes Yue borrows books from the school library as well. Wang-ling does not want Yue to borrow too many at a time. "It is quality, not quantity that matters," she told Yue.

Wang-ling, a librarian of many years in China, felt lost in the downtown library. She had difficulty choosing the right books for Yue and sometimes chose books far beyond Yue's ability. She just looked at the cover that indicates

the reading levels, as she did not know what to borrow or what Yue liked. For example, Yue is in the age range of grade two and they figure that she is probably close to the level two as indicated on the book covers, so they borrowed 20 of the level two books. "I feel so lost when I was trying to choose some books for her. I just do not know what are suitable for her." Wang-ling says.

Yue does not like to write in either language. She seldom writes at home, except to practise the words that her teacher has sent home to practise. Compared to the amount of reading she does at home, her writing is minimal. She finds that writing is much harder than reading, and there are few occasions that motivate her to write. For example, before Christmas she wrote a wish list for Santa asking for a teddy bear, books, toys, a dog, video, beanie babies, ball, and doll. She also wrote a few journals when her parents bought her a diary with a lock, and a few stories expressing her dream to be a princess. Strongly influenced by the fairy tales she reads, her stories almost all begin with "Once upon a time, there lived a little girl..." (see Figure 8). At the end of December, when her parents' friends came from China to stay for a week bringing gifts that her grandparents sent, she wrote a letter in English to them (see Figure 9). But she does not feel the necessity to write, "It is too hard. And what do I write for any way?" Although her mother has tried many ways to encourage her to write, she asks her mother, "Why should I write?"

Yue likes to draw. Her little coffee table is always piled high with drawings about different stories that she has read or experienced. She draws

Once upon a time there lived a little girl
 name Lisa, she lived with her big sister
 and brother also her mom and dad.
 when Lisa was 4. she dream of being
 a princess she kept on dreaming until
 she was 13. everyday she look at her
 mother's wedding Pichie.

Figure 8. One of the princess stories Yue wrote. Her stories were evidently the influences of the videos she watched and the books she read. Like many other stories she wrote, this story begins with "once upon a time..."

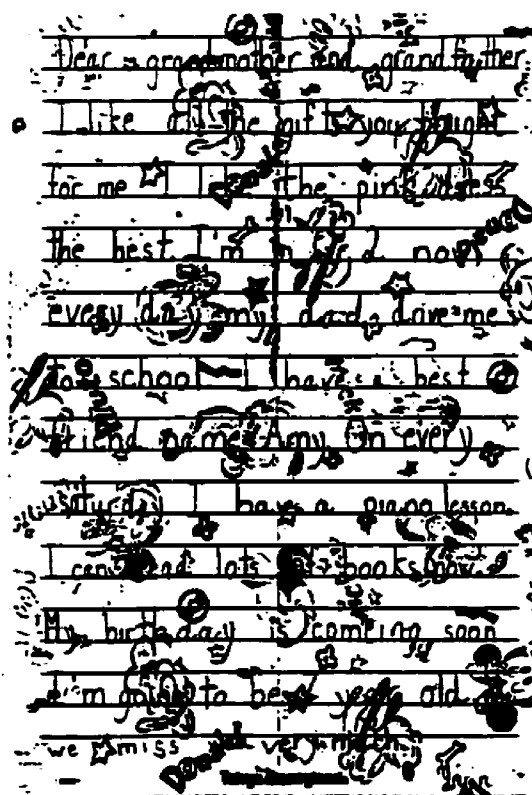


Figure 9. Yue's letter to her grandparents. As she could not write much in Chinese, she wrote a letter in English to her grandparents in China after she received their gifts.

pictures about her parents to express her love for them, her dream of being a princess in a castle along with her Chinese friends (see Figure 10), and stories of princess meets prince (Figure 11). Her January project in school was about dinosaurs, so she drew pictures of plant-eating and meat-eating dinosaurs and put them on the wall.

Her other passion is music. Although Yue's parents are not financially strong, they spend money on Yue's musical development. Music is considered an important aspect of a well-rounded person. In China, learning piano and violin are luxuries of middle and upper-class families. It is considered to be a noble art. Neither Wang-ling nor Zhang-bo plays piano, but they want Yue to learn. They bought Yue a second-hand piano and pay \$30 a week for private lessons from a Canadian music teacher, and she is required to practise piano almost every day. Her mother supervises her practice every night after supper, checking how many times and how many pieces she plays and whether she plays them correctly. Their hard work was rewarded when, in the April 1999 musical festival piano competition, she won first place in her age group. She was very happy. Her mother and father were very happy, but they told her not to be too proud. "Keep practising diligently and work hard! That is the key to success!"

Yue is also good at singing. One night she sang us all the Christmas songs that she had learned at school, at piano lessons, and at other gatherings such as the Christmas parties organized by the International Students' Advisor's Office at the University. She can remember all the tunes and

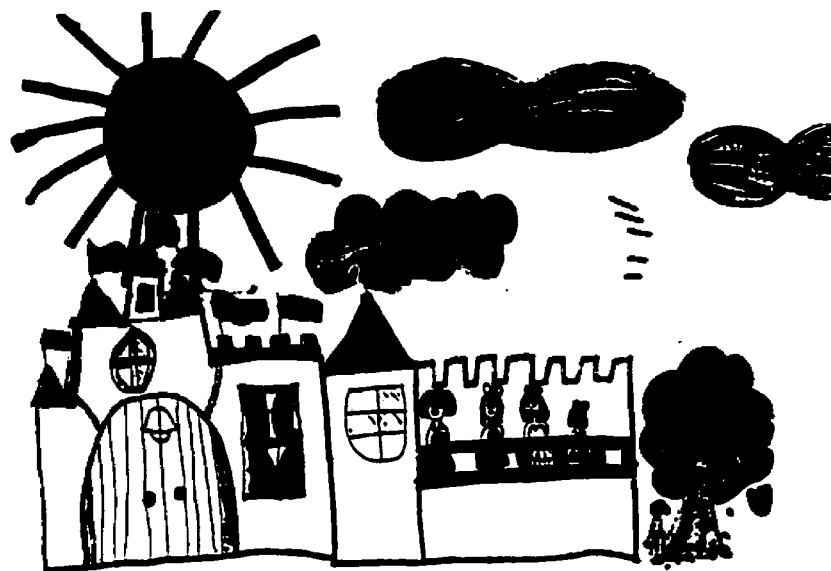


Figure 10. A sample of Yue's drawings. This picture is about her and her friends, all princesses, living happily in a castle.



Figure 11. A sample of Yue's drawings. This story is about a princess who finally meets her prince. The handsome prince came with a sword.

words of songs from a Christmas carols collection such as *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*, and *Silent Night, Holy Night*. She can sing very well all the songs she learned at school such as *We are Going to the Zoo, Zoo, Zoo* .

Like many other girls of her age, she is a pop music fan. She knows every Spice Girls' name and has collections of Spice Girls' pictures, which she saved from bubble gum wrappers. She also likes to watch romantic movies such as *Titanic*, *Cinderella*, and *Anastasia*. Her favorite television show is "*Ally McBeal*", an adult sitcom. One day during my visit, when her mom forgot to remind her of the time, she cried because she caught only the last part of the show.

Because of the violence and adult scenes in TV programs, Wang-ling controls Yue's television watching. The family does not have children's channels since they do not have cable. Therefore, Wang-ling prefers Yue to watch videos they borrow from the public library. That way she is sure that the videos are made for children. Wang-ling and Zhang-bo rarely buy her videos. In the past three years, they bought only two videos at a discount price. Every time when they are in the public library, they borrow several videos at a time. She watches TV and videos with captions so she can understand the words better.

Yue's Social World

Yue has very few friends. Her mother says that she is a "lonely child". Her best friend is Amy, another Chinese student in her class. Occasionally they talk to each other on the phone or have sleepovers at each other's homes. They

play together in school every day, but rarely see each other after school because they live in different parts of the city.

In the same building where Yue's family live, there are a few Chinese children who are older, but they do not play well together because of their age differences. Since Yue's parents seldom have contact with the Chinese families in the building, they seldom let Yue go to visit them either. The other Chinese families are like theirs: the husbands are graduate students at the University, and their wives work as manual laborers in factories, hotels, or restaurants. Knowing that they are struggling with their lives, Wang-ling says, "Everybody is busy and tired after work. We are all struggling to get by. I know how hard it is. It is not very polite to bother them too much."

Yue's occasional playmate in the hallway is a Caucasian boy Michael, who is about her age. Michael's father lives in one of the apartments on the same floor, and his mother lives in an apartment in another building nearby, and both are on welfare. Wang-ling does not like Yue to play too much with Michael although he is a good child. Michael's parents' relationship clearly indicates very different family and cultural values, and Wang-ling does not want Yue to be influenced by them.

For Yue, exciting times of the year are the Chinese and Canadian festivals. She likes Chinese festival seasons the best. The Chinese Students' and Scholars' Association at the University organizes all kinds of cultural activities for important festivals such as the Mid-Autumn Festival, China's National Day, and the Spring Festival. All the Chinese students and their

families get together to celebrate. While her parents meet with other Chinese people to play cards or chat, Yue joins the Chinese children to play games and do tricks. Unlike the parents who speak Chinese all the time, Yue and her friends talk to each other mainly in English. During western festival seasons such as Christmas, they are invited to attend Christmas parties sponsored by the International Students' Advisor's Office. The most enjoyable part of the parties is that she can learn different Christmas carols from the choirs. Although she can meet children from other cultures, she usually plays only with other Chinese children at those parties.

Yue's father notices that her circle of friends inside and outside school is mainly Chinese. He cannot understand why. In his opinion, Yue does not have a language problem as he and his wife do, and it should not be difficult for her to mingle with local children. Staying exclusively in a Chinese circle is not necessarily a good thing for Yue's future in Canada. Zhang-bo says:

Her friends are mainly Chinese. Like the saying goes, "Birds of a feather flock together." In school, they play with other Chinese students and they do not mingle with local children. The same with the Chinese girl upstairs. I think this is a problem too. Although they will not have a language problem like we do, they are restrained within the Chinese culture and the Chinese way of thinking. If she grows up in this environment, it will restrain her way of thinking, and she will have a gap with local children of her age. She will be detached from the culture of her generation. The culture here in Canada requires us to become

assimilated with them [Caucasians], not vice versa. Of course they [Caucasians] are going to maintain their culture and to go the Canadian way.

Yue's parents' social circle is mainly Chinese as well. Like many Chinese graduate students' wives described in Jiao's (1994) study, Yue's mother's only non-Chinese circle is the weekly Jehovah's Witness Bible study group. Most of the time, Wang-ling takes Yue along as there is an eight-year-old Caucasian girl there. The study group is usually two hours long and is too formal for Yue. Yue cannot play much and does not like it. The study group, particularly an elderly lady Lonnie, is Yue's family's only contact with local Canadian people. Lonnie is well known among the Chinese wives. She and her husband are in their 60s. They volunteer fulltime to teach the Bible to Chinese graduate students' wives. Every week, even on weekends, Lonnie goes door to door to teach the Bible. Wang-ling became one of her students not long after she came to Canada and has been studying the Bible with her. As Zhang-bo says, "it [studying the Bible] is a way to learn English language and the culture of Western society, as Western society is based on the Biblical beliefs."

Working on the production line in the sewing factory all day, Wang-ling does not have other opportunities or time to make new friends other than Lonnie. Zhang-bo's friends are mainly Chinese students from the University. They help each other with university study such as assignments for their computer science courses. He made a few local Canadian friends through his

postdoctoral work. He thinks that cultural difference and language difficulties are the barriers for him to mingle with local Canadians:

I have very little contact with local people. Because we have very different cultural backgrounds, and because of my language problem, it is impossible to have deeper communication with them. I will get more familiar with the cultural customs here as times goes on, but it is impossible for us to overcome completely.

Zhang-bo realizes that insufficient contact with local Canadians might have a negative impact on Yue's acquisition of Chinese and Western cultures. In his opinion, the best way to raise a child in a Western society is to combine the Eastern with the Western, taking the good from both cultures. If the two cultures are not balanced in a child, the worst consequence is that the child turns out to be neither Chinese nor Western. He worries that their social environment might be problematic for Yue:

For Chinese culture, we only have family environment for her, but there is no social environment for her. Forming a cultural custom depends on the social circle. Family circle is too small, so she cannot accept a lot of traditional Chinese things. Chinese culture had a lot of good traditions and values. But living in another culture, you can not experience it or learn it. Because of the language loss, they may lose all the good of the culture.

In terms of Western culture, she socializes in the small Chinese circle, and may not be able to understand the deeper level of the culture,

the good things about the culture. Instead, they easily accept the superficial things, and the bad things. For example, how to curse people, they can learn really fast.

To pass on good Chinese traditions to Yue and prevent her from accepting the bad, superficial things from the West is not an easy task because she is exposed to Western material culture everywhere including on the street and in the media. Zhang-bo finds that Yue has learned some superficial Western values and lack of personal discipline:

The biggest change about Yue is what I said, the superficial things. For example, I asked her to do things and to discipline her, she told me, "other people are not like this. Why you interfere with me and discipline me? etc. etc.." I guess in this society, they let the children play, and do things themselves and very seldom interfere or discipline them. But if we do not discipline them too rigidly to an extreme, it is good. But she does not understand this and learns the superficial things from the Canadian society. They like freedom. Of course, it is uncomfortable to have discipline. But for little children, they never play enough.

Then how to teach Yue good values? Yue is only seven years old, and does not necessarily listen to Wang-ling's and Zhang-bo's teaching all the time. It is impossible for them to force their will on her. Wang-ling finds that direct teaching does not work very well; instead she uses real life examples to tell Yue about good values and bad values. Moral teaching is pervasive in every aspect of their lives. She gives two examples:

For example, when we saw a young kid smoking on the street one time, I asked her, "What do you think? Do you think this is good for kids?" She talked with her friends about it and we talked about it too. After we explained to her, and she thought about it herself and agreed with us that smoking was not good for young kids or anybody.

Another example is the other night when we were watching a movie we borrowed from the library called *Now and Forever* which stars Shirley Temple. Shirley was playing by the lake, and met a stranger (though he turned out to be her father). She talked to the stranger and even went with him for a ride in a boat on the lake. I asked Yue whether Shirley Temple did the right thing. Yue said, "Why not right?" Then I explained to her about it and she understood what I was trying to tell her. So I think we cannot just talk generally about the good values to her, but we have to educate her through the things that we experience in our daily lives.

Yang Li and His Family

Yang Li is a grade-one student. He came to Canada a year ago, before the start of my study, with his mother to join his father who was a master's student at the University of Saskatchewan. His father Li-yong, a former engineer in China, is pursuing his master's degree at the University. His mother Nie-dong, also a former engineer, is a lab assistant working on a casual basis at the University. Below is a profile of Yang Li and his family.

The Li Family

Family Members	Age	Previous Occupation	Current Occupation	Education Level	Years in Canada
Li, Yong (Father)	32	Engineer	Masters Student	B.Sc. China	2
Nie, Dong (Mother)	32	Engineer	Lab Assistant	B.Sc. China	1
Li, Yang (Son)	7	—	School Student	Grade 1 Canada	1

Six-year-old Yang has a lot in common with Yue: he is the only child in the family; he came from China with his mother to join his father; he goes to the same school. Like Yue's parents, his parents are determined to follow the Chinese traditions and keep their Chinese names and his Chinese name, which means "the sun in the hometown". And like Yue's parents, his parents' lives revolve around him. Around his neck Yang wears a green jade necklace with red strings, the god "Pu Sa" that Chinese people believe will protect them when they travel afar. It was a gift from his grandparents a year ago when he and his mother Nie-dong left for Canada to join Li-yong.

The three of them live in a one-bedroom apartment on the second floor above a Chinese cafe. There are five apartments on the second floor including two one-bedroom apartments and three bedroom/kitchen apartments. The six tenants share two washrooms. All the tenants are university students: three Chinese, one East Indian, and one Canadian.

Their apartment is crowded. The kitchen is very small with a stove, a refrigerator, a couch, a dinner table, and a sink. Li-yong sometimes studies

English at the dinner table when Nie-dong and Yang are studying in the bedroom, where they spend most of their time. There are two mattresses on the floor against each side of the wall, with a narrow walkway between. At the other end of the room facing the beds is a desk where Yang and his father do their homework, a two-level TV stand with a TV, VCR, and tape recorder, and a tall bookshelf packed with Chinese and English books, including TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) materials, Chinese textbooks for Yang, lab manuals, Chinese medical books, dictionaries, and old magazines they bought for Yang at a book sale.

The building the Lis live in is four blocks from the University, and about a minute's walk to Yang's school. It is so convenient that the Lis do not want to move, although they know their apartment is too small for the three of them. Sometimes, Yang misses the new, spacious, and clean apartment they bought in China, which Yang and his mother enjoyed for only a year before they sold it and went to Canada.

Yang is afraid of his father Li-yong. Whenever his father is present, he is disciplined and quiet. His father has strict rules and standards for Yang's behavior. Li-yong, though only thirty-two years old, has experienced hardship in his life, losing his parents when he was very young and growing up with his sister. As an orphan, he experienced poverty and hardship that most people could not imagine. These experiences have made him a determined and strong person, and he studied very hard in school and was an excellent student. When he finished high school, he was admitted to China's most

prestigious university, Qing Hua University, a university that every Chinese student dreams of attending.

Li-yong's time at Qing Hua was very hard. He had to borrow money from classmates and relatives to support his education, even though he did not like to depend on others. He understands that independence, personal effort, and self-discipline are the keys to success. After he graduated from Qing Hua, he got a job in a drug factory in the capital city of his home province, where his fiancée was working. A year later, they married and had their son Yang.

The Lis lived with Nie-dong's parents after they were married. The grandparents took care of Yang and, like all other Chinese grandparents, spoiled their only grandson. Yang did not have to learn life skills such as how to put on his clothes since the grandparents took care of everything. Li-yong did not like it, but had to respect the elders who treated him as their son. Now they live alone in Canada, and he wants Yang to be independent and strong because he is going to be a man, carrying the family name. He wants him to be successful, so to achieve that, Yang needs to train himself.

Growing up through a harsh childhood, Li-yong strongly believes in self-discipline and being strong from a young age. Therefore, he sets standards for Yang's behavior. He deliberately guides Yang to a high ambition for the future. "Harvard medical school is the best!" he tells him, and expects him to be able to discipline himself to do homework or work assigned him; he should be able to get dressed and get ready for school without further reminding; he should behave when they have visitors. He should follow a routine, for example, going

to bed at 9:00 p.m. But Nie-dong knows that Yang is only six years old, and should behave like a child. She thinks that he has already made a lot of progress since he came to Canada, and needs to change gradually, not overnight.

Li-yong was never content with what he was doing. He had the same dreams as all his other Qing Hua classmates -- to go abroad and get a North American graduate degree. Qing Hua University graduates are famous for their international endeavors and for their difficult yet successful academic achievement. Li-yong studied TOEFL and GRE (Graduate Record Examination) while working full-time. In order to focus on his study, he even moved out of their apartment shared by three generations to a dorm to live alone and study. He studied so hard that one time, he forgot to eat, and almost fainted. His hard work was rewarded. In 1997, he was admitted to the University of Saskatchewan to do his master's degree.

Studying in another culture and language is challenging for Li-yong. He studied hard to conduct his experiments, prepare lab reports, and pass the exams. He understands that he needs to improve his English. At home, he continues to study TOEFL and GRE books he brought from China to enrich his vocabulary. He uses a Walkman to listen to English tapes to improve his listening comprehension. But his favorite reading at home is the Chinese version of the *People's Daily Overseas Edition*, which comes weekly from the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa.

Yang is much more affectionate with his mother Nie-dong than with his father. Petite and peaceful, Nie-dong is the same age as Li-yong. They grew up in the same village. Nie-dong had a much easier life than Li-yong, who had to be independent at such a young age. She lived with her loving parents except for the four years she attended university in another city. Even in that city, she had relatives to visit every week. Compared with Li-yong, her life has been a blessing. In university, Nie-dong told her classmates that she did not want to be a housewife; she wanted a steady job and a happy family, where she could accompany her husband and teach her child. Her dreams came true after she got married and had her own family.

The first couple of months in Canada were like a holiday for her. She stayed home with her son, cooking, and taking care of her husband, and attended the English classes in the Spouses' Program offered by the International Students Office at the University of Saskatchewan. Then, one of the labs at her husband's department needed a lab assistant, and she sent in her application. Because her English was so limited, the employer was hesitant to hire her. For a graduate student's family, it is very important to have some income to support the whole family. In the first couple of months, they could barely get by on Li-yong's scholarship from the University. The opportunity for Nie-dong to work gave hope to the whole family. She had never been so anxious to get something in her whole life, and volunteered for two months to prove she was capable of doing the job. The professor finally decided to hire her.

Nie-dong will never forget her first days at work; she could not understand a word the professor and her colleague said. She had to learn to use all the instruments in the lab at the same time. She wanted to show her boss that she was able to do everything technically, she was just having problems with the language. She became exhausted immediately, and the next week, she was sick. Because of her work load and schedule, she had to quit the English classes offered by the International Students Office.

Gradually she learned how to operate the instruments and do the required analyses. She learned to feel more comfortable working and is back to her full-time work routine. She goes to work at 8:30 am, and comes home at 5:30 p.m. to cook supper. After supper, Li-yong usually goes back to his lab to work, while Nie-dong stays home with Yang. She supervises Yang's studies, talks with Yang about school, and helps him with his English to the best of her ability.

Nie-dong does not have much time for herself after taking care of her husband and son. After Yang goes to bed, Nie-dong has a moment of her own. She likes to read, and in China, she read Chinese magazines and novels, but in Canada, there are not many available. She can borrow Chinese magazines from friends or ask Li-yong to download some magazines from the Internet. Because Nie-dong is also anxious to improve her English, she forces herself to read English materials. Sometimes, Li-yong brings some English newspapers home, such as the *National Post*. She looks through the newspaper and tries to understand the articles.

The regular English materials she reads are the Jehovah's Witness monthly publications: *The Watchtower: Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom* and *Awake!* Although she can not accept everything the religion preaches, she likes some of the articles about family values and health. Nie-dong accepts whatever is congruent with her own values, for example, one article entitled "*Real Help for the Family*". Nie-dong thinks family members should help each other, and a wife should help her husband and children to grow. Another article was about spiritual/moral purity, "*Keep Clean Inside and Outside*". Nie-dong agrees that a person should have inside and outside integrity as a person. She also likes some of the scientific articles, and regards some as valuable. "Some of the things they talk about are useful too," she commented and showed me one of the issues to prove her point. One of the articles was about "*Chemicals and Your Health*", outlining the danger of chemicals in our daily lives. As her own work involves working with chemicals, she believed that the article talks about important things.

Besides leisure reading, Nie-dong reads some of the papers or lab requirements from her supervisor. She needs to figure out the right procedures and some of the names of the drugs involved. If she cannot finish those articles in the lab, she takes them home to study. Sometimes, Li-yong helps her because his English is better than hers.

Except for the regular lab work diary, Nie-dong does very little writing, since there is no need to write. She discovered that the problem with her English was not her reading ability, but her speaking ability, especially her

pronunciation. She cannot understand her supervisor if he does not write down how he needs the job to be done; when he or the Polish woman in the lab speaks to her, she cannot understand much, and she cannot make herself understood very well because of her poor pronunciation. In the beginning, Li-yong helped her every evening with the words used in the lab after they came back from work. He taught word by word and she practised after him. It helped, and she is now learning English from Yang. Yang learns English so fast, and he does not have a strong accent. She reads Yang's books after Yang and practises with him. As Yang's books are children's books with everyday language, Nie-dong feels that she is learning a lot and is learning real English too!

Having grown up with his grandparents who are in their 70s, and being the only child, Yang is a lonely boy, like millions of other Chinese children who have no siblings or friends to play with. He is used to playing by himself and usually plays with toys such as a plane or a motor cycle or other things in sight such as a dictionary, imagining his journey encountering aliens through outer space. He makes strange "wuuuuu" sounds and totally immerses himself in his imaginative worlds. He will play like that for hours if his parents do not stop him.

But this play does not affect his personality as a cheerful and outgoing boy. He is talkative, and his language ability is exceptional for a six-year-old. He is very eloquent, and he speaks in the manner of an adult. He can talk with adults for a long time, even on the telephone. However, his ability in Chinese is

receding as his English progresses rapidly. Nie-dong told me during one of our telephone conversations, "he could not express himself as well as before. He got very frustrated sometimes because he could not remember some words. Now he uses some English words to replace them. But sometimes he does not have English words either."

Having been in Canada for almost a year, his English has developed quickly. When he first came to Canada, he did not know a single word of English. In order to teach him English, his father made word lists, and flash cards in both Chinese and English from some children's books they borrowed from the public library, and both he and his wife taught Yang to read the words every day (see Figure 12 for a sample of Yang's bilingual wordlists). Yang attended kindergarten for a short time in China. In order for him to have a sense of language continuity, they continued to teach him Chinese characters using simple Chinese poems they downloaded from the Internet in the first couple of months (see Figure 13 for a sample of the Chinese poems they used). Now Yang can speak in different contexts, and can read books in English. When he first attended school in Canada, the other children called him "cry-boy". Because he could not understand a single word the teacher or the other children said, he felt so frustrated that he cried a lot. His teacher had to call on other children who were bi-lingual to help him. Yang cried a lot at home as well, and asked his mom if he was stupid. He told his mom it was not very good to be Chinese. Figure 14 is about his loneliness, which he wrote in December 99 after about three months in school.

Word List (单词表)

tie	领带	sink	水池
sock	袜子	car	轿车
sweater	羊毛衫	suitcase	衣箱
T-shirt	T恤衫	box	盒子
skirt	裙子	goat	山羊
pants	裤子	kitchen	厨房
cat	猫	soup	汤
car	汽车	sandwich	三明治
camera	照相机	light house	灯塔
cow	牛	sidewalk	人行道
carrot	红萝卜	castle	城堡
cloth	衣服	coat	大衣
lion	狮子	soldier	士兵
wagon	小车	nurse	护士
fox	狐狸	six	六
pan	平锅	saw	锯子
fan	扇子	hose	(洗汽车, 浇花的)软管
pig	猪	tiger	老虎
police	警察	surprise	惊奇的
fence	篱笆		
piano	钢琴		
fish	鱼		
fork	叉子		
finger	手指		
pen	圆珠笔		
four	四		
pie	馅饼		
popcorn	爆米花		
fireplace	壁炉		
pumpkin	南瓜		

Figure 12. Yang's bilingual wordlist. Yang's father copied the words from children's storybooks, checked the Chinese meanings of the words, and made bilingual wordlists to teach Yang English.

一片一片又一片
两片三片四五片
六片七片八九片
香山红叶红满天

Translation:

[One piece, one piece, another piece

Two pieces, three pieces, four, five pieces

Six pieces, seven pieces, eight, nine pieces

The red sky on the Xiang Mountain is red maple leaves]

Figure 13. A poem used for Yang's Chinese study. Yang's father downloaded some Chinese poems from the Internet to teach Yang Chinese characters. This poem focuses on the teaching of numbers and quantifiers.

Mom you Not more go
 out you can ~~go~~ satm room
 but I is satm room
 mom you satm room
 wate you bo you bo
 Satm room you can
 Play with me ok.

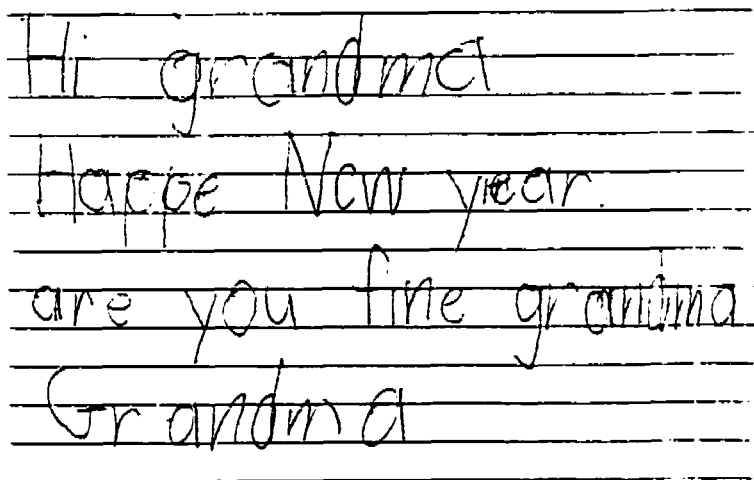
Translation:

[Mom, do not go out. You can stay home. I stay home with you. Both you and I
 stay home, and you can play with me.]

Figure 14. Yang's letter to his mother. At the time this letter was written he did not have
 any friends in the school, and wanted to stay home with his mother to play.

Now Yang can mingle with other children and play with them. He can understand the games they are playing. His best friend is Emanuel, a black boy in his class. They play together either in the classroom or outside on the playground. He is no longer the "cry boy" who thought he was stupid. He is confident in himself, "I am very good at study. I want to be a president!" His dream is that he will have a huge house with big computers: an office for himself, one for his mom, and one for his dad. When his parents read the flyers for groceries, Yang reads the flyers for his future house and offices. He likes to pick through the flyers of Future Shop or Home Hardware, where there is a large selection of office supplies. "I like this one. This is for my office. That one is for mom. Mine is the biggest!" he says, "But mine costs a lot of money, lots lots of money. I need to make money first!"

Although Yang has become more and more involved in school life in Canada, he misses his grandparents and remembers the things they did together. He remembers China, his fun time in his kindergarten class in China. When his parents phone home, he enjoys talking to grandma and grandpa. He even tried to write to grandma and grandpa in Chinese. He told his mom what he wanted to say to them and his mom wrote it in Chinese. He then copied it down and sent it to China. It was hard for him to write this way; he said, "I forgot most of my Chinese!" And when he misses his grandma, he writes in English. As shown in Figure 15, Yang wrote a note to his grandma during Chinese New Year.


 A photograph of a handwritten letter on lined paper. The text is written in a cursive, child-like script. The lines of the paper are visible, and the ink is dark. The text reads: "Hi grandma", "Happy New year.", "are you fine grandma", and "Grandma".

Hi grandma
Happy New year.
are you fine grandma
Grandma

Figure 15. Yang's letter to his grandma. During Chinese New Year 1999, Yang wrote a letter to his grandmother in China. Yang who grew up with his grandparents misses them very much after coming to Canada.

Because he enjoys listening to stories, Yang asks his mom to read him a Chinese story every night before he goes to bed. Nie-dong told me that Yang already figured out different functions of English and Chinese, "It is so strange that he knows the difference. It is clear to him that English is something he has to learn, a necessity for school and for talking with other non-Chinese people. But to listen to Chinese stories is a pastime, a relaxing moment. I guess it is the same as us." His mother borrows Chinese children's stories from other Chinese friends, stories from Chinese classics such as *The Monkey King*, and *The Three Kingdoms*. When they run out of Chinese stories, they read the Chinese textbooks they brought from China.

Yang is a good storyteller, retelling stories his mother told him. He is interested in space and big animals such as dinosaurs, able to retell information about planets, and make up stories about them. One evening, he told me a story in Chinese, an example of his imaginative ability. Later he also drew a picture of the story (Figure 16):

In the space, the stars crashed. One UFO did not fly away. The UFO shined with light. The light was so hot that it melted all the other stars around it and they exploded.

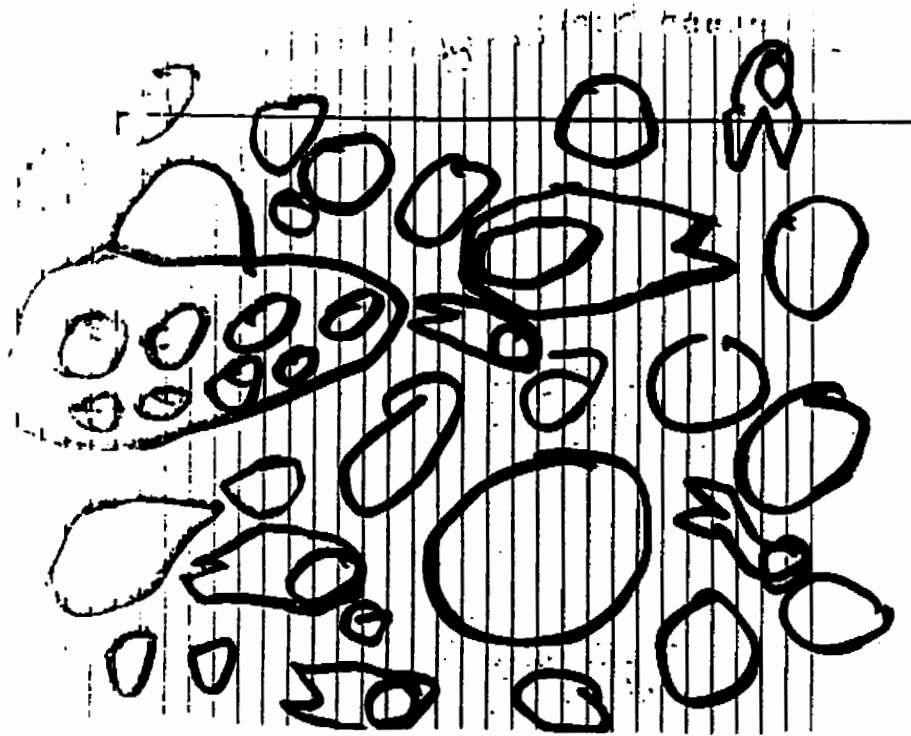


Figure 16. Yang's UFO picture. Yang drew a picture of the UFO and the explosion in the outer space.

Yang's comprehension level in Chinese is developed to a grade-one level, he can "talk" out a lot of English books from the pictures from his knowledge in Chinese. His Chinese literacy skills affect what he likes to read in English. For example, he does not like those books for beginners that his teacher sent home with him from school. In his words, they are "baby books". My understanding is that, because his English is at the beginners' level, not matching his comprehension ability, the teacher considers it is appropriate for him to start from books that have only a few words so that he will not have difficulty reading. Apparently he does not like those "baby books" that are considered more suitable for his English reading. On the contrary, he likes books with story lines and more words. His mother commented that he could understand some of the story lines by looking at the pictures, and can retell the stories in Chinese. But if he reads line by line, those storybooks become discouraging because he has many new words.

Nie-dong also noticed that as an ESL learner, Yang's cognitive process is different in terms of his comprehension development. She told me her observation during one of our conversations:

Yang learns the meaning of words in Chinese first. Unlike English as first-language learners who, once they learn how to read a word, understand the meaning. For Yang, the procedure is more complicated - he has to internalize the meaning in Chinese after learning a new English word, then he can get the meaning of the English words.

On a typical weekday, Yang's mother Nie-dong goes to work at 8:00 a.m. As a student, his father Li-yong does not have to go that early, and stays home to make sure Yang goes to school at 8:30. Li-yong does not want to escort Yang to the school, which is only a minute's walk from where they live, because he believes that Yang is old enough to go to school himself and it is important for him to develop his independence. In the first three months, the Lis all came home for a hot lunch because none of them was used to a cold lunch. Gradually, Li-yong and Nie-dong decided to let Yang have lunch at school with the other children. They bought a Thermos kind of lunch bag so that Yang could have a warm lunch at school. The Lis found that by letting Yang have lunch with the other children, his English improved quickly. Now Li-yong and Nie-dong pack a lunch for Yang every day.

Yang likes to stay in school for lunch where he has friends to play with. He does not like the late afternoon time when he has to stay alone waiting for his parents to come home. School is over at 3:30 p.m. and his mother finishes her work at 5:00 p.m. If she needs to work overtime, Li-yong goes back home to cook or to wait for Yang to come back from after-school day care. Or they sometimes come home together to get dinner ready. Dinnertime is usually their time together. They turn on the TV and Li-yong watches the news, especially the weather. Sometimes, if Li-yong misses the weather, Yang, who finishes supper earlier than the two of them, retreats to the bedroom to watch TV. He can read from the TV screen what the temperature is and becomes the weatherman of the day.

After supper, Li-yong goes back to his lab to continue his experiments. Nie-dong stays home with Yang if she does not have to work overtime on an analysis. If she has to work during evenings to finish some of the work left from the day, she takes Yang to her lab. This is Yang's favorite time. Nie-dong's lab has two computers, and Yang plays games on one of them while Nie-dong works on the other. Sometimes he spends a few hours in the lab playing games. When I was with him one day, he barely spoke except shouting and repeating after the games that he could play on the computer: "Game over, Man! Game Over!" or "Oops! You missed!"

When Nie-dong is not working in the evenings, she spends her time studying with Yang. First, Nie-dong supervises his reading the two books he brings home from school every day. Yang reads first, and Nie-dong listens. If they run into any new words, Nie-dong checks the dictionary to figure out the meaning in Chinese. Then to have fun, they take turns reading, with Yang reading a page and Nie-dong reading a page. This way, they are both reading and learning. Li-yong usually types the words from the books and prints them out at the University, and brings them home, so that Yang can practise reading and copying after they return the books to the teachers or the libraries. One evening before Halloween, they read together *Halloween Storybook* that Li-yong has printed for them (see Figure 17 for the story).

Yang started to read and they did not know the word pumpkin, so they checked in an English and Chinese dictionary and found out the meaning of "pumpkin" in Chinese. As Yang read, Nie-dong underlined the words that they

Halloween Storybook

See the big pumpkin.
 The pumpkin is orange
 It is round
 It is a Jack-o-lantern.

The little ghost is white
 It is scary.
 The ghost can fly.
 It can say "boo".

See the little bat.
 The little bat is black.
 It can fly up.
 It can fly down.

Figure 17. Yang's Halloween Storybook. His father has printed the story for him. His mother underlined the words that they had problem in pronunciation.

had problems in pronouncing, and asked Yang to repeat the words later. After Yang read it a couple of times, they began to take turns:

Nie-dong [in Chinese]: Yang-Yang, let's read the story together. You read first and I will follow you.

Yang: Hao! [Ok!]. See the big pumpkin.

Nie-dong: Gai wo le [my turn]. The pumpkin is orange.

Yang: It is round, round, round, round, round...

Nie-dong (signaling him to stop): Yang-Yang!

Yang (he stops and makes faces to her): Gai Mama le [Mom's turn]!.

Nie-dong: It is a Jack-o-latong.

Yang: Bu shi de, Mama [no, mom]. Shi [it's] jack-o-lantern, lantern, bu shi [not] latong!

...

Yang's next task is to copy the sentences from the books. Nie-dong and Li-yong believe that copying the words is good for Yang's spelling. If one of the two books is more than thirty to fifty pages long, they let him copy shorter books. Yang copied many books such as *Halloween Storybook*, *Where they are going*, and *Wind* which are only about ten pages in length with only about six to seven words on one page. Figure 18 is an example of Yang's copying work.

Sometimes Nie-dong teaches Yang math using the Chinese textbooks they brought from China. They are now working on Book 1. Li-yong's job is to enhance Yang's math by giving math homework based on the textbook from China (Figure 19).

Yang's favorite time is his routine "mother and son" talk, where Yang takes out a piece of paper and a pencil and requests of his mother to have a little conversation. Yang reports what he did and learned at school that day. This is how Nie-dong learns what Yang's school is all about as the work Yang

Where are they going
Where are they going
Look! Here is a wizard.
Look! Here is a hairy ~~thing~~
thing.

Look! Here is a dragon.
Look! Here is a scary thing
Here is a tall thing.
and here is a small thing.
Where are they going?
To play on my swing.

Figure 18. Yang's copying work. Yang's parents believe that if copying is an effective way to learn Chinese characters, it is also a good way to learn the correct spelling of English words.

填 > 或 < 到空格中

$$5 \boxed{<} 6 \quad 6 \boxed{>} 5$$

$$\begin{array}{cc} 6 & 6 \\ \swarrow \searrow & \swarrow \searrow \\ 5 \quad \boxed{1} & \boxed{4} \quad 2 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{cc} 6 & \\ \swarrow \searrow & \\ 3 \quad \boxed{3} & \end{array} \quad \checkmark \quad 100/100$$

Figure 19. Yang's math homework. The math homework was made by his father and corrected by his mother.

does at school is seldom sent home, nor is there any homework except the two books from school.

Yang likes weekends, especially the routine family excursions for grocery shopping at Superstore on Friday night. On Saturday morning, he can sleep in and watch cartoons on TV, as several of his favorite shows are on Saturday mornings. After that, they go to Chinatown to buy Chinese groceries. Yang sometimes gets Chinese treats from there. In the afternoon, he goes to his father's lab to study for a couple of hours, while Nie-dong studies Bible with Lonnie, a Jehovah's Witness, who also teaches Yue's mother Wang-ling.

But Yang's favorite weekend excursion is to go to the downtown library to borrow storybooks. Books are very important in this family. Yang already knows how to check out the books on the computer. Once when I was with him in the library, he sat in front of the computer, and entered the book title he wanted with my help. Then he scrolled down and selected the book, copying the call number on a piece of paper. Then we went together to find the book. After we were ready to go, he handed the librarian his card and checked out all his books like an adult.

The family borrows storybooks from the library, trying to find books that will interest Yang. Yang likes books with tapes, especially those with songs. The tape of *Winnie the Pooh* is one that Yang has listened to over and over again even though there were many new words in the book. Another favorite book from the library is *Healthy Habits*. Yang can sing along with the tape.

Because Yang showed so much interest in music, Li-yong and Nie-dong bought an electric keyboard for him.

Although they are very frugal, the Lis try to spare some money to buy books for Yang. They do not buy storybooks because they can borrow them from the library. They know that once Yang finishes these storybooks, he will not read them again and they are not worth keeping. Therefore it is not worth wasting money on storybooks. The Lis go to bookstores to buy books for practical reasons -- to enhance Yang's academic development in either English or math. I showed them different bookstores in town one day when they told me they needed to buy some books for Yang. We went to a bookstore called Learning Works where workbooks are available, and the biggest bookstore, McNally Robinson. They bought math and language arts workbooks for Yang. They believe that, because Yang has no homework from school, he needs some workbooks to help him learn better.

The Lis also ordered two books through Yang's school, a less costly way to buy books than from bookstores. Yang's teacher sends them some catalogues together with Yang's readings, and all they need to do is to fill out a form with titles of the books they want, and the school will order them. Because the school can get a discount, it is much cheaper. They let Yang choose the books he wants. In November, he got Disney's *Mulan* and *The Elephant Family*. In December, he got books about solar systems. In February, Yang chose two books related to his new interests -- *Dinosaurs*, a book about all kinds of dinosaurs, with three-dimensional pictures under a three-dimensional viewer

provided with the book, and *Winnie the Pooh's Valentine*. Yang loves his new books. His mom told him the stories about each dinosaur in Chinese and he retold the stories to me. He also made a dinosaur book of his own, writing it and drawing pictures of different dinosaurs and telling me the stories he was trying to tell through his book.

The Lis also go to some book sales to buy books to cultivate Yang's interests in science and geography. They bought several issues of the children's journal *Owl* for five cents each. *Owl* is a journal about birds and animals. Li-yong and Nie-dong have decided to subscribe to the journal.

Six-year-old Yang has already demonstrated amazing talent in geography, which he learned from his parents and from reading picture books and maps in China. He can locate most of the countries in the world on the map, and tell the geological features, the climate, and the animals of the country. For example, one day he pointed out Australia on the world map on the wall above his bed and told me about Australia -- the desert, kangaroos, and even the population. His dream place is Thunder Bay. The name of Thunder Bay just struck him. His father promised to take him for a holiday there. At a book sale in the downtown public library, Li-yong bought an old *Atlas of The Great Lakes*. The atlas soon became Yang's favorite. He reads all the charts and illustrations and compares the sizes of Detroit, Chicago and Toronto. Because I have been to Toronto, I told him about the highest tower in the world, the CN Tower. He drew a map of Toronto, which he called "*City of [t]oronto map*". He drew streets, with street signs, parks, and avenues, and of course

the CN Tower. The map shows that he already has some of the "functional literacy" of what a city should look like.

TV cartoons and videos are an important part of Yang's leisure time. When he stays home alone while his parents are at work, he watches lots of cartoons such as *Bug's Bunny* and movies such as *Air Force One* and *Speed* that his dad taped for him. He watches different TV programs as well. The TV is always on with closed captioning. This way, they can listen and at the same time see the words to help with the words they missed. Yang watches TV and learns English from the actors. Sometimes, when his mother phones from work, he will say a long sentence to his mother without understanding what it means. Nie-dong will ask, "What are you talking about? Say it again?" Yang says, "I just learned from TV."

Yang knows the TV schedule of several cartoons and animations. He watches the animated Eddie Murphy show *The JP* on Tuesday nights and if he can stay up late, he watches *The Simpsons* at 10:00 p.m. He likes to sleep in with his mom and dad on Saturday morning, watching *Bug's Bunny*, and *CBC Playground*, where several other cartoons are shown. He knows when a new episode is on. Drawing pictures of the cartoon characters such as Chippy Go-Road Runner, Penguins, Tweety and Puddy cat is also one of the things he likes to do, although his parents do not want him to draw too much at home, since it seems that he does a lot of drawing at school. Figure 20 is the story of Tweety he drew.

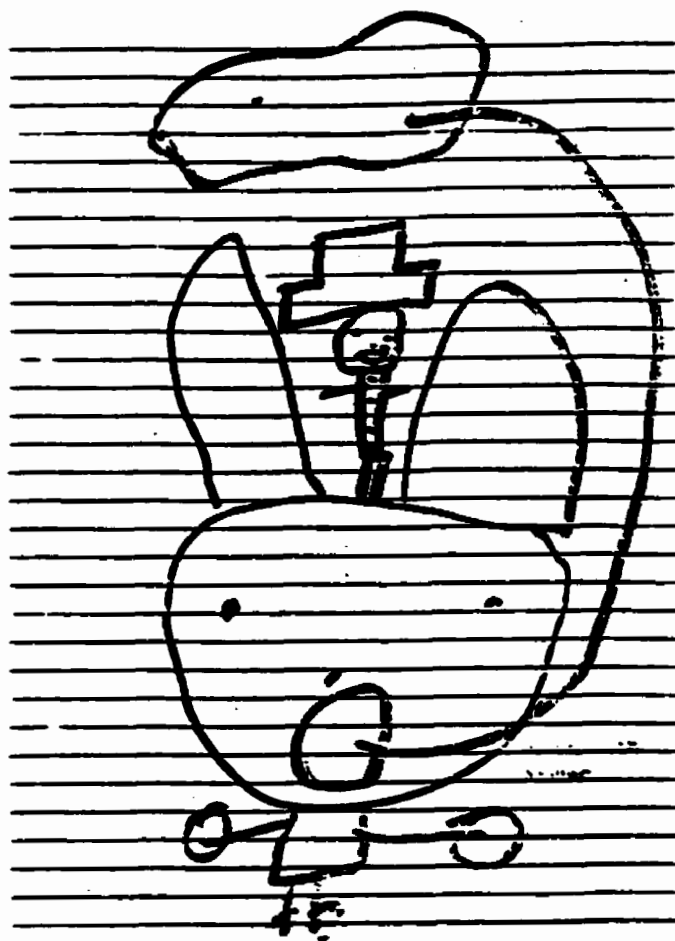


Figure 20. Yang's cartoon character drawing. Most of Yang's drawings were based on the cartoons and movies he watched. This drawing was based on a cartoon he watched on *CBC Playground* on Saturday mornings.

As an infant "pop" fan, Yang has begun his "Spice Girls" books and is familiar with the names of Shania Twain and Back Street Boys. He is also aware of things about China. For example, he told me about the Chinese figure skating team in the world championship, and that the Chinese team got to second place. He has learned which stickers are popular. For example, he asked his mom to buy a kind of cheese package that has a collection of stickers he likes. His new interest is to collect hockey cards that are popular among his classmates.

Yang's Social World

Yang does not have many friends. After school, he does not have contact with other classmates, not even his best friend Emanuel. His only playmate is the Chinese girl Amy, daughter of the downstairs Chinese cafe owners. Amy was born in Canada and is Chinese/English bilingual, so Yang can speak with her in either language. He speaks more and more English with her as his English is getting better. Amy sometimes corrects him if he speaks English incorrectly.

Yang lives predominantly in a Chinese world. He goes to their family friends' homes to visit on weekends or to borrow Chinese books and videos. He goes to the Chinese festival parties sponsored by the Chinese Students' and Scholars' Association at the University. Although he does not know any of the children there, he enjoys watching some of the shows at the parties.

Their weekly routine of grocery shopping is a community event. Yang's parents take some other Chinese students who do not have a car along with them to Superstore on Friday evenings. Superstore is a place where Chinese students meet other students to chat and exchange information while grocery shopping, or when they are waiting for others in the exit waiting area. The information they exchange includes food, housing, and job hunting. One time, the Lis met a Chinese couple who had been working as manual laborers while looking for better jobs, and had found a good job in Winnipeg several days earlier. This news was quite encouraging to Nie-dong and Li-yong. Nie-dong comforted Li-yong afterwards that they need not worry about finding employment either. The good news from the Chinese couple cheered them up, and they saw hope for themselves. For Yang, grocery shopping is an exposure to all different kinds of things – fancy packages, toys, books – a rich print environment. He learned about the Eiffel Tower from the jigsaw puzzles. Sometimes he meets other Chinese children there and stays in the book section reading the books.

Another family community venue other than Superstore is the Arts lounge at the University where Nie-dong and Li-yong have their lunch daily. The lounge has microwave ovens, hot water, cutlery and other necessities, so many Chinese students across campus come here for lunch. Li-yong and Nie-dong come here every day with other Chinese students from commerce, chemistry, arts and sciences, and education. The lounge becomes the Chinese students' information center. They exchange information on all subjects – politics,

immigration, shopping, cooking, housing, parenting, employment, news from China. More importantly, Nie-dong and Li-yong can discuss what is going on in their children's schools because some of the graduate students are also parents.

Yang's family does not have much contact with local Canadians. In Li-yong's lab there are a few students from Canada and other countries, but Li-yong seldom socializes with them. In Nie-dong's lab, there is no one else to talk to except the Polish woman with whom she occasionally chats about children and weather. Nie-dong admits, "My world is work-home, home-work. I have very little contact with Canadian society."

Nie-dong's only contact with Canadian society is the Jehovah's Witness lady Lonnie, who is also Yue Zhang's mother's Bible teacher. Lonnie comes every Saturday afternoon to teach Nie-dong, while Yang and Li-yong go to their lab to study. Sometimes, the whole family goes to the Jehovah's Witnesses congress on weekends. Both Nie-dong and Li-yong agree that it is a good opportunity to learn English and practise speaking with native English speakers. Like many other Chinese students' wives, Nie-dong regards studying the Bible as an opportunity to practise English and it does not change her own beliefs:

I cannot change what I believe in. In China, I was not a pure Buddhist, but I believe in Buddhism. In the Bible, they preach things that they cannot reason. For example, Jesus, it says, Jesus is the Son of God, son of Jehovah. Jehovah created the whole world. And we must believe

in this. So why they want to say it this way and force us to believe him?

So I find this hard to accept.

In terms of the religion, they accept what they consider as the true, the good, and the beautiful, and reject some of the preaching that does not meet their own values. Because they are aware that some of the values or messages do not accord with their own, they are very careful what to read to Yang. Li-yong comments:

For example, in the Bible stories, they treat Jehovah like the Chinese emperor. If one does not obey his command, he kills the person. I think this kind of belief is absolutely wrong. People have different ideas. The prerequisite of one's freedom is not to interfere with other people's freedom. So I asked Nie-dong not to read Yang any stories from *The Biblical Stories* any more. It will have a bad influence on him.

Although they live predominantly in a Chinese world, Li-yong does not think that the influence of the home environment will exceed the influence of the larger English environment. Li-yong says:

I guess if Yang lives in this environment, he will experience some difficulty. Once you are in this environment, you can not avoid the influence of the so-called Western culture. They receive it in school, it is shown on TV and in movies. You can not detach from it. But he will have some Chinese influence from us too. I expect the culture in him in the future will be 20% Chinese, 80% Western! He is in Canada less than a

year, Western culture influence is already dominant. Ten years later, it would be stronger and stronger.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described the home literacy contexts in two academic Chinese immigrant families, the Zhangs and the Lis. In spite of their limited physical living space, rich print resources characterize the home literacy environments of the two families. The two focal children are involved in a variety of literacy activities -- reading, writing, oracy, drawing, and music, which they do in a variety of contexts -- at home, at grocery shopping, in the library, or in the lab. Though living in a Western society, the children (and their families) live predominantly in the closed social world of their ethnic community, and do not mingle with local Canadian communities. Media, including TV, videos, films, and the computer, play an important role bridging the families with Western society. Education is highly valued by the two families. Though the parents, particularly the mothers, are working fulltime to survive financially, they carefully structure their daily life schedules in order to accommodate the needs of their children and to help them with schoolwork.

This account of the home literacy practices of the two focal children in these two academic families has demonstrated a similarity to the literacy values of the urban middle-class families in Confucian China in the socialist market economy as reviewed in Chapter Two. The parents have brought with them their literacy values established in their home country (such as a high

emphasis on academic achievement, effort, and homework) and continue to influence their children's literacy learning with these values in Canada. When implanting these Confucian values in a Canadian context that is foreign to them, they often experience cultural clash. As Wang-ling, Yue Zhang's mother comments, "Sometimes I think it must be hard on kids like Yue, because what we do at home is not the way the teachers do at school. The kids have to adapt to two ways of learning." To better illustrate the differences in school-home literacy practices, I have provided a more detailed account of the experiences of these two focal children and their families in Chapter Six.

Three themes can be identified in the stories of the two families: 1) home-literacy environment, 2) social isolation, and 3) media influence. I shall provide a discussion of these themes in Chapter Seven and provide implications that emerge from them in Chapter Eight.

In the next chapter, I tell the stories of the Lius and the Yes, the two entrepreneurial families. The literacy practices in these two families are quite different from those in the two academic families.

CHAPTER FIVE

LITERACY IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL FAMILIES: THE LIUS AND THE YES

The stories that unfold in this chapter are the literacy experiences of the other two focal children in the home milieu of the two entrepreneurial families in the study. This chapter develops an understanding of what, when, and where the children and families read and write, what their parents' educational backgrounds and cultural beliefs are, what their home literacy environment and social world are like, and how their parents support their learning.

Literacy at Home: What it Is and What it Means

In this section, I describe the literacy practices in the Liu family with Derin Liu being the focal child. Then I present the literacy practices in the Ye family with Amy Ye being the focal child. I have included in the description their home literacy environment, daily literacy experiences, and social world.

Derin Liu and His Family

Eight-year-old Derin Liu is a grade-one student, repeating the year for the third time. He and his three sisters, who are in higher grades, were born in Canada. His parents, who were factory workers in China, came to Canada about twenty years ago. They now operate a Chinese restaurant of their own in the Chinatown area in Saskatoon. Here is a profile of Derin Liu and his family.

The Liu Family

Family Members	Age	Previous Occupation	Current Occupation	Education Level	Years in Canada
Liu, Peter (Father)	48	Factory Worker	Restaurant Owner/Operator	Grade 4, China	17
Liu, Kathy (Mother)	45	Factory Worker	Restaurant Owner/Operator	Grade 12, China	21
Liu, Derin (Son)	8	—	School Student	Grade 1	Born in Canada
Liu, Erin (Daughter)	14	—	School Student	Grade 8	Born in Canada
Liu, Fay (Daughter)	15	—	School Student	Grade 9	Born in Canada
Liu, Gina (Daughter)	16	—	School Student	Grade 10	Born in Canada

Derin is the only boy, the "little" one in his family. He has a round chubby face, is affectionate, and likes to cling to his mother Kathy's shoulder, hugging and kissing her. He has three siblings and an extended family, with grandparents, aunts and uncles in Canada. Most of his extended family are in a small town, Sundance, in Saskatchewan, except his Aunt Sandy's family who live with them in his grandparents' house. Derin's parents and grandparents own and operate a restaurant, but his grandparents spend most of their time in Sundance with their other families. Grandmother comes home to visit occasionally, while grandfather seldom comes to the city, except for the Chinese New Year, because he has serious arthritis.

Everyone in Derin's family and extended family has both an English name and a Chinese name. Among the family, some adults use their Chinese

names, but most use English names. All the children are called by their English names.

Derin and his family live in an old house in a lower socio-economic neighborhood, not far from the old Chinatown on the west side of the city. Their house used to be an old restaurant owned by his grandparents. Because Derin's parents sold their house, and Kathy's sister was divorced with two children and had no job, the grandparents converted the restaurant building into a family house for the three families. Living with their extended families has financially helped Derin's parents, Kathy and Peter, because they do not have to pay rent. Kathy's sister Sandy stays home and looks after all the children. Kathy and Peter can focus on their business in the restaurant and know that their children are safe at home with adults whom they trust.

The house has three families living in three living quarters with no structural divisions: Kathy and Peter's family live upstairs, three bedrooms for six of them. The four children sleep in one room. The grandparents have their own bedroom and Sandy and her two daughters Lisa and Jenna live downstairs, with separate bedrooms. The three families share the kitchen and eat together.

The kitchen area is set up in a typical old-style Chinese way, with a big aquarium in the entrance area, probably a good Feng Shui (geomantic omen) according to *I Ching*. Around the corner is a shrine to the Chinese gods, and ancestral tablets. Incense is burned and the worship food is displayed at all times. On one side of the wall, there is a Chinese calendar, a telephone

directory in Chinese, and a chart of Qi Gong practice. Although there are five children and four adults living in the house, it is clean and tidy, with everything in its place. It is hard to imagine that this is a house with five children. The beds are made, clothes folded and put in drawers. There is nothing lying on the floor. The children seem to know the rules of keeping things in place.

There are five TVs and VCRs in the house. On the shelves beside each TV there are videotapes, children's Disney collections, Chinese movies, and English movies. Two big-screen TVs are always turned on, showing some Chinese or children's films. The older girls watch Chinese movies from Hong Kong upstairs in the common living room, while the little ones watch children's movies downstairs. There are no books in the common living area. On a shelf in the shared bedroom of Kathy and Peter's three children, there are a few books neatly displayed. Three of the books, the *Archie Comic* series popular among adolescent boys, belong to Derin. Although he cannot read the words, he likes to look through them once in a while when the bedroom is open. (The bedroom is locked most of the time when all the children are at home. Derin's sister Erin has control of the keys.)

Because they live in a disadvantaged neighborhood, Derin and his sisters and cousins do not play outside very much, even in the summer. After school, they come home together and stay in the house most of the time with the door locked. Aunt Sandy sometimes gets Derin's cousins together to study, but Derin and his sisters do not have much homework to do and they spend most of their time watching videos. They stay close to each other and do not

have friends from outside their family. Erin and her cousin Lisa are always together at school and at home and they do not have friends from school. Unlike many teenagers who spend hours talking on the phone, they spend their time watching movies together. If they have any problems with their studies, they phone their older cousins in the small town Sundance for help.

Although he is the "little emperor" of the family, Derin has problems coping with school. Although he grew up in a bilingual environment, Derin is not fluent in either Chinese or English, and his English is better than his Chinese. His words are fragmented and he communicates mostly through body language, gestures, and grunts. For example, when he wants water, he turns on the tap, lets the water run, and says, "drink!" Then the people around him know he is thirsty. If he wants to tell other people what is happening in the movie he is watching, he imitates what is happening. When he was watching *The Jungle Book* during one of my visits, for example, I asked him where the tiger went. He crawled on the floor, and told me, "tiger go like this, like this!" He is less capable in Chinese than in English and he rarely speaks Chinese at home. Because of his language difficulty, he does not have long conversations with anyone, not even his mother. Sometimes, he tries to tell the stories in English of the videos he watches, and his mother cannot understand. He gets so frustrated he calls his mother "stupid!"

Derin cannot read or write in either language. He can sing the ABC song in fragments until the letter G, and he can identify a few letters if he pays attention to them. He cannot count or identify colors. Although he can write his

name, he cannot read the letters of his name. His mother has realized his problem, and has asked his sisters to help him, but they are not teachers, nor are they disciplined themselves, and they have their own studying to do. He can get only very limited help at home. Derin spends all his spare time watching Disney videos. He and his sisters own almost every children's video imaginable. On a day when no one paid attention to him, he watched twelve videos.

Shortly after he was born, Derin's parents bought a bigger restaurant and they became very busy operating their new business. He was left to his grandmother, who was also busy taking care of other children in the house, and did not have much time for him. He was put in front of the TV or left by himself. Derin has not spent much time outside his home, except to visit his relatives in Sundance or visit his parents in the restaurant. And, of course, he goes to his school. He has never been to the downtown library, the city zoo, a theater or a museum. One time I accompanied him when he went to the geology museum at the University of Saskatchewan for the first time. When we drove across the bridge, he was very scared, and afraid that we might fall off the bridge. He told me that he had never crossed the bridge before.

Derin seldom sees his parents, because they return after he has gone to sleep every day. His life is simple: Up at 7:00 am, to school at 8: 15 am., and home at 3:30 p.m. After school, he watches videos with his sisters and cousins until dinnertime. Sometimes they watch three movies or more before bedtime. He likes weekends because there is no school, and he and his sisters can

watch as many movies as they want or repeat the same movies as many times as they want.

Derin usually watches videos alone but sometimes he watches with his cousin Jenna who is in Grade 3. He seldom spends time with his sisters. His eldest sister Gina lives in Sundance with their relatives and rarely comes home to visit. Sixteen-year-old Gina is known as the bad-tempered girl in the family, fighting with her sisters and brother and parents. To make peace in the family, Gina was sent to live with her aunt's (Kathy's sister) family in Sundance, where they operate several businesses including a small grocery shop, a video shop, and a tailor shop. After school, Gina helps in the stores. Kathy and Peter hope that by working in the stores, Gina will learn to get along with others and control her temper, and learn English through talking to customers.

Derin's second sister Fay has also experienced difficulty at school. Shorthaired and quiet, Fay is fifteen years old. She appears timid, her head slightly bent and her eyes lowered. Her grandma and aunts, who want her to look cheerful and confident, criticize her whenever they see that she appears insecure. They tell her to show people her strength through body language, "Chest out! Chin up! Look confident in yourself!" But Fay is always the way she is, and the family has almost given up on her.

In grade four, Fay was placed in a program for special-needs students. Now, enrolled in a life-skills training program for special-needs adolescents in a high school near her home, Fay takes courses such as home economics,

lifestyles, visual arts, and technology. From these courses, she has learned independent living skills such as cooking, kitchen safety, and swimming.

Fay is a lonely child. In her elementary years, she lived in the shadow of Gina. They were in the same class and Gina was always more aggressive than she was. At home, her sisters and brother did not play with her, and she has no friends. After school, instead of going home, she goes to her parents' restaurant to help in the kitchen, where she chops vegetables, washes dishes, and vacuums the restaurant. Usually, she comes home from school around 1:30-2:00 p.m. and stays in the restaurant until 9:00 p.m.

Derin's third sister Erin does well in school. After school, she watches videos in the upstairs living room with her cousin Lisa who is in her class in school. On weekends, she works in a Chinese grocery store to earn money to purchase a computer or helps in the family restaurant.

Derin's parents spend most of their day at the restaurant. His father Peter gets up every morning around 7:00 am, drives Fay to school and comes back to the restaurant to get ready for the day's business. His mother Kathy usually stays home in the morning and has breakfast with the children. This is the only time that Kathy can see the children during the whole day. When she comes home from the restaurant around midnight, the children are already in bed. Unlike Fay, who spends most of her after school time in the restaurant with their parents, Derin sees very little of his parents. Sometimes he does not see them for a couple of days.

Kathy goes to the restaurant around 10:00 am every day to help her husband. Their restaurant is open from 10:00 am to 11:00 p.m. Peter does all the cooking and seldom comes out of the kitchen. Kathy stays outside the kitchen and serves the customers. Their restaurant is a typical Chinese setting: the chairs are Chinese red, wooden Chinese lanterns hang from the ceiling, Chinese paintings hang on the wall, and the menus are in Chinese characters on a writing board. On the left side of the room toward the kitchen is a big aquarium; on the right side on top of the counter stands a large TV that is on most of the time. They bought a satellite dish to receive Chinese programs from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Toronto. The satellite programs have attracted Chinese customers who work in the Chinatown area, and come for lunch or dinner to enjoy the news and current soap operas from their home country. The Chinese programs are also the Lius' main entertainment. When it is not busy in the restaurant, they sit around the TV and watch Chinese soap operas. Their favorite show comes on at 4:00 p.m. Grandma and Sandy sometimes come over to join Kathy to watch the TV program. Since they do not watch English programs or listen to English radio, they rely on the Chinese channel from Toronto to get some Canadian news and the weather conditions in Saskatoon.

When they get bored at home, Derin and Erin sometimes go to the restaurant. Kathy thinks that it is not good for business if they have young children running around in the restaurant, so she sends them to the basement where there is another TV and VCR and a shelf full of videos for both children

and adults. Derin stays downstairs most of the time watching his favorite shows such as *Quest for Camelot* and *Mulan* and drinking his favorite soft drink. He comes upstairs only when he is hungry.

Another attraction for the Chinese customers is the magazine rack behind the counters beside the kitchen door. There are Chinese magazines and newspapers bought from Chinese grocery stores or through subscriptions. The customers like to watch Chinese TV, look through Chinese magazines, and enjoy a moment of "being home". Peter and Kathy read these magazines too. When there are no customers, she reads the Chinese magazines, and Chinese modern love stories by Taiwanese and Hong Kong authors.

Kathy also has a shrine in the storage room where worship food is served and incense is burned. Like many other Chinese restaurant owners who believe in Buddhism, they hope that their Chinese gods will protect their restaurant and bring them good business. Their business is directed towards the local Chinese community, who come to enjoy authentic Chinese food. They have some regular Western customers as well and they have separate menus for Chinese and Western customers.

Although Kathy and Peter have been in Canada for almost twenty years, they have learned little English. They can only manage simple greetings in English such as "How are you?" "Good" or "Not too bad!" They cannot read or write in English. A Chinese graduate student who worked in their restaurant several years ago helped them with their English menus, and their

advertisement in the yellow pages in the phone book. All the items in the English menus are numbered in Arabic, and are in the same order as their Chinese menus so that it is very easy for Kathy to record customers' orders. Kathy and Peter write all their Chinese menus themselves. And occasionally they change their Chinese menus on the wall.

Kathy came with her family from China to Canada after her high-school graduation about twenty years ago. In her school years, which were during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, English was not a core course. During her school years in China, she was very sick and had to do physiotherapy every afternoon for several years and missed most of the English classes that were offered in the afternoon. Therefore, she learned very little English in Chinese schools. After she came to Canada, the family worked hard to survive in the new world. She worked at two jobs for four years: one in a sewing factory from 7:00 am to 4:00 p.m., the other as a dishwasher in a restaurant from 5:00 p.m. to 12:00 p.m.. She barely had time to sleep and had little time to do anything else such as learn English. Her jobs were in a Chinese community and she needed to do very little communication in English. When she recalls those times, she became very emotional, "I want to learn English. It is easy to say it. You cannot imagine how difficult it is! As time goes on, you just give up. I did not have time to sleep, not to mention studying English. I had to help my parents to feed the whole family!"

Raised in China, Kathy wanted a husband who could share the same culture in Canada. Like many other early single Chinese immigrants, Kathy

went back to her hometown in China and married Liu Peter, who lived in the same village and later illegally went to Hong Kong and became a button factory worker. Peter followed Kathy to Saskatoon and they started a family.

Peter had only a grade-four education in China. Although he is a good cook, he is not interested in his own or his children's education. After he came to Canada with Kathy, he has been working in different kitchens in Chinese restaurants in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. His jobs have been in the noisy and busy kitchen area; he seldom has an opportunity to communicate with people outside. Nor does he have any time to learn English. In order to support his family, he has worked day and night at different restaurants. "Ah Ya, Mei shi jian la! [Just no time]", he shook his head.

Peter learned how to cook through his various kitchen jobs. Both Kathy and Peter are very proud of that. "He is hard working and smart. He did not go to any school to learn it, and his cooking is as good!" Kathy showed me the menu and told me this with a big smile on her face. When they had saved enough money, they bought a small restaurant in Saskatoon and settled down. Soon their three daughters (Gina, Fay, and Erin) were born. As with many Chinese families, they wanted a son to carry their name, and finally six years later, their youngest child was born and he was a boy! They named him Li-gang in Chinese, which means upright and strong, but among the family, they call him by his English name Derin.

The business of the small restaurant went well, and the Lius gradually saved some money, besides supporting the family in Canada and Peter's

family in China. Peter and Kathy decided to expand their business in Chinatown and buy a bigger restaurant. They sold their house and used the money and some of their savings to buy a bigger restaurant, which they have been running ever since, moved into Kathy's parents' house, and have been living with her parents and Kathy's sister's family.

Both Kathy and Peter have English names. When I first asked Kathy how to spell her name, she went to check on a piece of paper for the spelling. Because they cannot speak or write English, they rely on other people to deal with anything English. For example, they call on Kathy's brother Jeff for major decision-making. To pay bills, to write cheques, to translate newsletters from school, or to read business letters for them, they rely on their children, especially Erin; and they rely on Lillian, Kathy's Portuguese friend who can speak Chinese, to learn about the children's progress in school. Kathy said "Lillian knows more about them at school than I do. The teachers look for her first when they are in trouble." I sensed that she had a mixed feeling about it, so I asked her how she liked it. She said, "Good that somebody knows about it. But we did not know enough about it, especially sometimes when the matters are not big enough, and they do not bother to tell me."

Derin's Social World

Derin has no friends of his own. Every day he comes from school and stays home with his sisters and cousins, watching their separate shows they buy or rent from video stores. He especially enjoys visits from his cousins from

British Columbia, who are children of his mother's youngest sister and about his age. The cousins, who can speak English, Cantonese, and German, bring toys and movies, and play with him at home. Sometimes during school holidays, he goes with his sisters to Sundance to visit his aunts and uncles.

Derin's family does not like to entertain visitors from outside their families at their home. Having lived in the Chinatown area for so long, Derin's family has lost trust in outsiders. Because they spend most of their time in the restaurant working, they do not have time to make friends or entertain them at home. Their friends are mostly from different businesses in Chinatown who are their faithful customers. One regular visitor is a Chinese insurance man James, from whom they buy insurance. He sometimes brings his family to the restaurant to have a family dinner. Another of Kathy's regular visitors is a Chinese woman Diana who owns a Chinese buffet and lives in the affluent area of the east side. Diana is a converted Jehovah's Witness and comes every Thursday afternoon to teach Bible to Kathy. Different from the women in Jiao's (1994) study who took Bible study as an avenue for English learning, Kathy uses the Chinese version of the Bible, and studies with a Chinese Jehovah's Witness person. Kathy is very industrious in studying the Bible and she has underlined many verses. She believes that any religion has something good for a person's morality, and she can take good teachings from the Bible. "Any religion has some good things. For me, I like to take the part I think is good. Taking all the good things and discarding the bad things can teach you how to

be a good person." She gave me this explanation during our usual chatting over a cup of Chinese jasmine tea.

Derin's parents' only friend outside their Chinese circle is a Portuguese lady, Lillian, who grew up in Hong Kong, emigrated to Canada twenty years ago, and who can speak Cantonese. They met at Kathy's first restaurant. Because they spoke the same language and are of a similar age, they became friends. Lillian, who often gets involved in the children's school meetings, has been the liaison between the Liu family and the schools. Whenever there is an important parent interview, Lillian translates for Kathy. If there are important meetings, the teachers send messages first to Lillian and Lillian informs Kathy.

Amy Ye and Her Family

Amy is almost three years old and is going to preschool in the fall of 1999. She and her brother and sister were born in Canada. Her parents came to Canada in 1994. Amy's father Tim Ye was a salesman and her mother Sue Lin was a provincial soccer player, a professional player in a state-run sports union in China. They now operate their own café/restaurant in Saskatoon. Here is a profile of Amy Ye and her family.

The Ye Family

Family Members	Age	Previous Occupation	Current Occupation	Education Level	Years in Canada
Ye, Tim (Father)	37	Salesperson	Restaurant Owner	Grade 12, China	4
Lin, Sue (Mother)	32	Soccer Player	Restaurant Owner	Grade 8, China	4
Ye, Amy (Daughter)	2.5	—	—	Entering Preschool	Born in Canada
Ye, Lucy (Daughter)	1.5	—	—	—	Born in Canada
Ye, Andy (Son)	0.4	—	—	—	Born in Canada

All Amy's family members have English and Chinese names, but use English names in their everyday life. Amy, with long silky black hair always tied in a loose ponytail, is the eldest child in the family. Her smiling face is like sunshine that brightens her family's restaurant. Her father Tim, a high school graduate during China's Cultural Revolution, worked in the sales department of a department store in Guang Zhou, Guang Dong Province (Canton). Her mother Sue, a junior high graduate, was a soccer player for the Guang Dong Provincial Team for 13 years before they immigrated four years ago to Saskatchewan with the help of Tim's uncle. They settled in a small town, and worked for almost a year at his relatives' restaurant, and then moved to Saskatoon where Tim worked for a year at three jobs – porter, dishwasher and kitchen helper. Although he did not sleep much, he saved enough money to start his own business.

They bought a restaurant on the west side of Saskatoon in a lower socio-economic neighborhood. They live in an apartment above the restaurant. In the restaurant, they serve coffee, hamburgers, and French fries, with the most expensive food being pork chops. The neighboring houses appear unattended, and along the sidewalk, there are broken beer bottles and garbage. The restaurant is in a somewhat run-down building where some people remain all day as if it were their living room. They drink coffee, chat, and smoke all day in the restaurant. Occasionally, a girlfriend or boyfriend of one of them storms in angrily, trying to get their partner to go home and take care of the children. They fight and curse in front of all the other people until one of them gives in. As Tim said, on their "cheque day", many of them order hamburgers or French fries or pork chops, and a pie for dessert.

Amy has grown up with these customers. Before she could talk and walk, her mother Sue put her in a cardboard box beside the gate of the kitchen where she was busy cooking and serving customers. When she got older, Amy began to talk and run around the restaurant, socializing with all the regular customers and getting to know them well. While her mother and father were busy cooking and serving, she visited with the customers. In one of two regular groups, there are two young men who are intellectually challenged, and who meet everyday at the cafe to play cards for two hours. The other regular group includes some neighbors who come to the restaurant to chat and smoke, middle-aged men and women, chain smokers, who like to play sexual jokes on each other. Amy stays at their table and plays with the adults when the other

two young men are not around. Sometimes, when I was there visiting, I could hear Amy imitating the customers saying "Shit!" "Stupid!" Sue commented, "Amy is still too young to tell good from bad."

In this home/café space Amy is growing up learning to be a bilingual, speaking English with the customers and Cantonese with her parents. Every time I visited the Ye family restaurant, I could see familiar scenarios as I watched her with English speaking adults, who have helped her with her English.

In the morning, while her mother and father are busy cooking and serving, she visits the customers. On a regular basis, Amy plays cards with the two mainstream, male, disabled customers in their twenties. They come to the Café every morning to have coffee and toast and play cards. The table in the back on the left side of the café is their "booked" spot. Amy sits with them entering the card game. The two young men enjoy Amy's company and use the cards to teach her numbers. Usually, their game begins with Amy picking some cards from the pile, and the two young customers ask her: *"What have you got?"* Or they tell her: *"It's four! Say four. That one is five. Say five."* Amy repeats after them: *"That's four, four. That's five, five."* She puts the card back on the table, picks out new cards and starts the game all over again. After several rounds, Amy asks one of the two men to pick some cards. This time she questions them: *"What have you got?" "It's thre-e-e. Say three."* Sometimes, the two friends question her on colors: *"What color did you get?" "Red!"* Amy

answers. The game usually goes on for a couple of hours in the morning until the two men leave.

In the afternoon, Amy has new playmates. Her new playmates are a group of regular customers who come to the café to have coffee and chat. Little Amy moves from table to table and talks with them. The customers are very affectionate with her. Sometimes they bring toys for her. Sometimes they teach her how to say a, b, c. At other times, she goes to them and asks questions, "*what's this?*" And sometimes she even ventures to take their cups or plates to the kitchen and gets lots of praise, "What a good girl!" When they leave, she waves them good-bye: "Be careful of the ice! See you later!"

Another kind of activity the two customers' play with Amy is a game-like routine. The two customers create a sequential structure and ask Amy to fill in following their examples. They not only deliberately routinize the game, but also try to model the language pattern for Amy. Their game goes like this:

Customer: It's a three.

Customer: What's this?

Amy: Three!

Customer: Yes, it's a three!

Amy: It's a three.

Customer: This is a five.

Customer: What is this?

Amy: A five

I became Amy's playmate when I visited. I let her scribble in my notebook. Her favorite subject was house. Her father and mother wanted to buy a house and may have told her about their dream of having a separate house from the restaurant. So during our drawing time, Amy particularly liked to draw houses. She drew some circles and told me what those circles stood for: "That is Amy's house. ...That's Guofang's house. That's Mommy's house. That's Lucy's house. That's Andy's house." (see Figure 21). Sometimes she wanted me to draw: "Draw Guofang's house. I want a house!" Sometimes her little scribbles became letters and numbers or funny faces: "That's a, d, g, b, and that's a funny face" (see Figure 22). And every time she insisted that we take turns. During her drawing, sometimes she would proudly announce to me, "I going to George School!" And she told me seriously, "When I go to school, I tell my teacher the abcs!"

Amy can identify quite a few letters that she has learned from one of her favorite toys, an alphabet finder in which she finds the different letters in a box and puts them back to their original models. She enjoyed scribbling on a piece of paper the letters and numbers she has learned and was quite serious when she told me about the letters and numbers and the houses she drew.

Amy does not have any books or videos, and she shares with her siblings a few broken toys that she stores in a cardboard box. Some of the toys were given to her by customers and friends whose children have grown up. Occasionally she would pull out a tattered rabbit from the box and play with it. Spending all her time in the restaurant, she has little opportunity to watch TV.



Figure 21. Amy's big house. Drawing a big house that she is going to live in is one of her favorite subjects.



Figure 22. Amy's funny face. Drawing funny faces is another one of her favorite subjects.

The old TV on the counter is never turned on; her parents prefer to turn on the radio for some music other than the voices of the customers.

Amy likes to read *Brown bear, brown bear, what did you see?*, a book which she received as a gift. She learned rapidly how books work. She has learned how to hold books, how to turn pages, and how to point to the pictures while reading. After she was read a few times, Amy could predict most of the words correctly. Sometimes she would jump ahead and speak out the words before the page was turned: "Yellow duck! White horse!"

Different from the customers and me the researcher, who have a lot of time to play with Amy, Amy's parents can only talk to her whenever they have a moment of rest between serving customers. Therefore, they often use direct instructions to teach Amy, and mainly teach her how to behave appropriately and some new words. For example, Amy's mother Sue directly instructed Amy how to be polite to guests during one of my visits:

Sue: Amy, ask Guofang want a drink. Say "Would you like a drink, Guofang?"

Amy: D'you like a drink, Guofang?

Guofang: No, thank you.

Amy (to her mom): Guofang no drink.

Amy's parents, who are busy most of the time, began to teach Amy numbers and letters whenever they had a moment or two between serving or cooking for customers. Although they do not know much English themselves, they can read and write the English alphabet as it is similar to Chinese Pinyin

(spelling system) and they have learned it in English class in junior school. Tim is also able to write the simple menus -- a necessity for changing the ones on the white board. Tim and Sue use whatever they have in the café to teach her -- beverage bottles, ice cream cones, snack packages, candies. Tim is usually very busy, in and out of the kitchen. When he comes out to get something, and if Amy is following him, he usually stops to capture the moment to teach her a few things. One of the things he likes to do is to teach her *abcs*, and he uses whatever is at hand. One time he came to get some coke for a customer and he pointed the letter C to Amy on his way to the customer:

Tim: What is this?

Amy: Coke!

Tim: No, no, the letter. What is the letter?

Amy: B.

Tim: No, that's C. Look, C, C. (*traces the letter c*). Here is another one. C.

That's the letter C. Say C.

Amy: C.

Or he would point to the red color and asked Amy: "What color?" She would say, "Red!" By the end of the data collection, Amy could identify most of the 26 letters, most of the colors, and some of the numbers. Amy's oral English language is better than many children of her age.

Although she has a lot of chances to learn oral English in the restaurant, Amy seldom goes outside the restaurant or plays with other children except with some children the customers bring to the restaurant. Her parents are very

busy and do not have time to take her to the park, the library, or the zoo. During one of my visits in the spring, she longed to go to play in a nearby park, but dared not to ask her father. With a whisper she asked me to take her to the park. With her parents' permission, we went to the park, and I watched her experimenting with some of the play apparatus, which she experienced for the first time.

Amy's parents find it hard to run a restaurant and raise three children. They cannot afford a babysitter and try to manage everything on their own. On a typical day, Tim and Sue take turns cooking and serving customers. Amy spends most of her time with the customers, Lucy stays happily in a box at the gate of the kitchen, and Andy sleeps in a car seat within Tim and Sue's sight. With a big sigh, Sue says, "We have no choice."

Neither Tim nor Sue could speak, read, or write English before coming to Canada. Tim has worked at different jobs and has learned some functional English. He can speak a little but cannot read or write. Sue took an English course sponsored by the Open Door Society, but the course was too short and did not help improve her English. She has managed to learn some functional English with the customers.

Although they are managing satisfactorily here, Sue regrets coming to Canada without sufficient knowledge of how life really is for immigrants, "If I knew life was like this, I would not have come." Three major changes in her life make her unhappy in Canada. One factor is the cultural differences. Sue feels she is living in an alien world in the English language and in a lower socio-

economic community, "It was too hard. I did not know the language, and the people I knew, for example, are not normal people. They do not work". The change from being a big city girl to a small restaurant owner in a foreign community is challenging for her. There is no entertainment such as dancing and Karaoke as there was in China, nor is there any leisure time for her to go to the park, to go shopping for clothes, or even to go for a movie or tea. "All day, I have to stay at home all day. I can't go anywhere. I do not even know what the word "fun" means any more," Sue told me with a sigh. Another change is that she no longer has close friends to share her happiness and sorrows as she had in China. She missed the old days in China, "friends are important. If you feel stressed or you have problem at home, you can talk to them. Now I barely have time to go out at all or to have a chance to make any friends". Her only friends are the few Chinese immigrants she got to know when she came to Canada, and they are just like her, confined to home with children. The third thing she does not like is that her life is routine and tense and she is exhausted every day. Every day, after work, she takes care of the three children, then goes to bed. She rarely has time to sit down and read something or study English. After giving birth to her third child Andy, according to Chinese tradition, she should have stayed in bed and rested for a whole month before going back to work. I was shocked because I know the Chinese rule, so I asked her whether she did not believe in the Chinese way. With tears in her eyes, she explained to me, "But in Canada the situation is different; I went back to work within a week after I gave birth. What else can you do? If my mother knew about

this, she would think I was insane. I dare not to tell her, because I know she will cry".

However, as the Chinese saying goes, "Marry a rooster, follow the rooster; marry a dog, follow the dog." As a wife, Sue is not thinking about herself anymore. Her heart is more on her husband and their children. When I asked her to sign her letter of consent for this study, she thought she did not need to sign because Tim is the head of the house. I explained that they are both parents and Tim can't sign for her. As a mother of three, she wants her children to have a good education to ensure their good life in Canada. She realizes that because she is so busy with the restaurant, she has no time for parenting, "I feel guilty sometimes, too busy to teach her. Just have no time with three kids and restaurant. What can I do?" She worries about many things, for example, what Amy is learning from the customers. On one hand, it is good for her to learn English from the customers; on the other hand, she is learning everything from them and is too young to discern what is good from what is bad, "I need to pay more attention, otherwise, she may learn something not appropriate."

Tim, being the head of the house, works very hard to maintain the business. He barely has time to sit down and read. Very rarely does he read the local Chinese newspaper that he can pick up from the Superstore. Since neither of them can read or write English, they rely on other people to help them with official letters or any written tasks for the restaurant, except for the menu board.

Their English reading includes mainly legal and document papers. They have no problem with bills, since they get the figure and pay it, but they did have problems reading the letters from the federal government immigration department about their application for citizenship. They did not understand why two letters came at the same time and why twice they were asked to go to the immigration office.

The first letter, I explained to them, asked Tim to have a hearing or oral test for his citizenship. The second letter asked Sue to take a citizenship oath. That means she has passed her oral test and her application was accepted.

On occasion, they needed to write notices to the customers, a challenging task. One day when I was visiting, the toilet of the restaurant flooded and a plumber was repairing it. Since Tim and Sue did not know how to write a notice for the customers, I wrote it for them: "We are repairing the drains. Please do not use."

Summary

In this chapter, I have described the home literacy contexts of two focal children in the two entrepreneurial families, the Lius and the Yes. In the home literacy environment in these two families, there are few print resources. However, Derin's family has a great deal of media material such as videos, films, and Chinese TV programs, while Amy's world is mainly oral speech. Derin is seldom involved in activities such as reading, writing, drawing, or any other forms of literacy, while Amy is actively involved in oracy practices. Neither

of them has had a chance to experience literacy in different contexts other than their home or restaurant. Derin spends most of his time watching videos at home, while Amy socializes with adult customers in her family restaurant. Derin lives in a closed social world between his family and his videos, while Amy seldom leaves the scene of the restaurant.

This account of the literacy experiences of these two focal children and their families has illuminated traditional Chinese values towards education. The parents, like many Chinese parents, have hoped for the best in their children's education and future, and have worked hard to support them in that goal. However, similar to those rural Chinese parents reviewed in Chapter Two, these two children's parents' educational background in China, their job circumstances, have allowed little time for them to spend with their children. Moreover, the parents in both families are unable to help their children with their school work as they themselves are unable to read and write in English. Confined by their long work hours and limited academic ability, it is natural for them to put their hope in the Canadian schools to educate their children. However, their limited experiences with Chinese schools and their insufficient knowledge of Canadian society and its schools have caused tremendous difficulties in their lives. The difficulties these two families have experienced in their children's school-home connections have been further analyzed in Chapter Six, together with the account of the experiences of the two academic families.

Three themes are prominent in the literacy and living in the two entrepreneurial families. The themes are 1) home literacy environment; 2) social integration; 3) the role of media (in Derin's world). In Chapter Seven, I have provided a discussion of these themes, and in Chapter Eight, of their implications for research and practice.

CHAPTER SIX

HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION

The issue of the connection between home and school is so prominent in the literacy lives of the four focal children and their families, that this chapter is devoted to that relationship. In this chapter, I describe the home and school experiences of the two academic families and the two entrepreneurial families, and then present my interpretation of the families' experiences. I include in this chapter a discussion of the parents' educational backgrounds and cultural beliefs, how they support their children's learning, and their perceptions of, and encounters with, Canadian education.

As an ethnographer, I present their perceptions in order to prompt readers to reflect on how and why the parents have these perceptions and what their perceptions tell us about home-school connections. Many readers who are familiar with Canadian school systems may find these parents' perceptions and understandings to be mis-perceptions or mis-understandings. However, their perceptions and understandings have significant influence on the literacy lives of their children.

The School and Home:

The Meaning of Schooling in the Two Academic Homes

In this section, I present Yue Zhang's and Yang Li's home-school experiences. Both children are taught by parents at home after school following Chinese ways of teaching. For them, home is another school.

Yue Zhang's School and Home

In Chinese education, moral education is always associated with intellectual and physical well-being. Educated in China, Yue's parents put an emphasis on her academic development as well as her moral well-being. Wang-ling says, "We value education, no matter where we are or what we do." However, to support Yue's schoolwork in Canada has been challenging for them, "it is a learning experience itself " (Wang-ling).

As mentioned in Chapter Four, Yue is in grade two and attended kindergarten in China. Yue continued her kindergarten for half a year before she went to grade one at Park Elementary School. She was not happy in school, because she did not know English. Other Chinese children did not like to play with her because she could not speak English. She was afraid to speak up and could not read stories. She was not confident in herself and was anxious to learn. The school did not help her with what she desired and left her with bad memories.

Yue was happy to transfer to Burnsville School for grade two. The school is closer to the University, making it easier for her father to pick her up and take

her home after work. She does not have to stay home alone after school as she did when she attended Park Elementary School. She has gained confidence; she can speak, read, and write in English, and can sing and play piano. In a recent piano festival competition, she won first place in her age group. She is doing well in school according to her report cards, and has friends, and wants to be a teacher when she grows up. Her mother encourages her, "If you want to be a teacher in the future, you have to study hard, then you can be a good teacher."

Wang-ling thinks it is a disadvantage for Yue not to have formal school experience in China because she knows that many other Chinese children who went to school in China now excel in Canadian schools. Chinese schools have strong training in math and language. Compared with Chinese schools, the Zhangs consider math in Canadian elementary school to be too easy. Both Wang-ling and Zhang-bo comment that it is too casual: "The level, compared to Chinese school level, is too low here. They are still studying addition and subtraction under 20 in grade two. Unbelievable!" Wang-ling consciously spends extra time at home on Yue's math. She says,

I use Chinese textbooks to teach her math. I follow the procedure of the textbook and the exercises in the book. They do not have math homework. I just teach her myself at home. I think it is especially effective that I teach her at home. At school, they often do an exercise. Students have to finish certain numbers of questions in a fixed time frame. So I

train her at home with more advanced questions, then the questions at school are easy for her.

Besides math, Wang-ling and Zhang-bo also help with Yue's writing. They are not satisfied with her writing, "She writes similar things all the time, and there is no breakthrough. She always writes about her going out playing and she was happy. That's it" (Zhang-bo). Wang-ling, who shares the same opinion, teaches her writing based on her knowledge of writing in Chinese. She believes that the skills of writing in both languages are transferable from one language to the other:

Chinese composition is helpful for writing in English. There are a lot of things transferable. There are many commonalities. I teach her writing in Chinese and she comprehends in Chinese and then writes in English. She can understand in Chinese. For me, it is easier to express in Chinese. So I think this way, it can enhance her Chinese. Sometimes, I use Chinese idioms and she does not know, and I can take the opportunity to explain to her.

In terms of language learning, Zhang-bo notices that an important approach in Canada is learning through drawing. In Canadian schools, drawing is viewed as one of the pathways to literacy. Children make meanings through pictures. However, drawing in Chinese education is classified as arts, not directly associated with language learning. It is viewed as the play of preschool age children -- "the age of innocence". Once children get to formal schooling, efforts in formal academic learning, rather than play such as

drawing, are viewed as important (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). Zhang-bo expresses his opinion of the Canadian schools:

I think the idea here is to learn something from drawing pictures. I think it is OK to draw a lot of pictures in kindergarten. They are young and beginning to learn the language. But to higher grades, if they still draw pictures, I do not think it is good. But if their drawings have a central theme, it is OK too. Sometimes they do not have themes at all.

Other than reading, writing, and math, Wang-ling can provide little help with Yue's school. She feels that she does not have sufficient academic ability in English. The newsletters that Yue brings home from school trouble Wang-ling because she does not understand what the teacher wants her to do, or how to do it. For example, one letter was about a research plan. She did not know how to do a research plan in English, although she knew how to do it in Chinese.

But a more important reason for being unable to help Yue is that the parents do not have as much knowledge of the curriculum as they would in China. Their knowledge of the school curriculum comes from the newsletters, Yue's talk, and the occasional work samples brought home. They also read Yue's report cards, but do not understand them very well. Neither of them was aware of Yue's other subjects such as science, social studies, or physical education. When I asked Wang-ling what other subjects Yue is learning at school, she said, "No, just English and math. Nothing else. At least I do not know and have never heard her talk about anything."

Wang-ling and Zhang-bo have little contact with Yue's school except for the annual parents' interview. It is always Zhang-bo who goes to the school meetings because Wang-ling has to work during the weekdays when the meetings are scheduled. Wang-ling says, "We have very little communication with the school. We have one interview every year. If we have questions, we could go to talk to the teachers. But we seldom do that. We are very busy..."

Their understanding of Canadian curriculum comes mainly from the work Yue brings home. For example, they became aware of what Yue was learning at school from her vocabulary sheets brought home during the term that I observed her. Yue brought home word lists mainly for three themes: dinosaurs, life in the sea, and pirates. They found it hard to comprehend the underlying logic, the coherence of the themes. Wang-ling questions:

Do they have a syllabus like in China? I do not know the objectives of their curriculum. They seem to lack coherence and consistency. A while ago they are studying sea animals, then they are studying dinosaurs, now they are studying pirates. In China, they are very systematic and they have objectives for each lesson.

Zhang-bo, on the other hand, not only questioned the coherence of the themes, but also the depth of the themes:

The way they learn spelling, for example, just the list of the words from the class. They do not have consistency. I guess, the curriculum is decided by the seasons. For example, it is spring and they talk about animals, sea animals. Now they talk about pirates. I do not know what

they can learn from pirates, how to rob gold and silver? So I think, if it is too random, it is not very good. They need to be systematic and coherent to have some continuity and at the same time have some room for flexibility is the best. Here they have too much room for flexibility, they cover a lot, but students can learn very little.

The vocabulary sheets are almost the only homework brought home. Although they help Yue with dictation using the sheets, Wang-ling and Zhang-bo think there is hardly homework. Wang-ling says,

I do not understand why they do not have homework. Although I make her study at home sometimes, but the tasks I gave her at home is different from those given by the teachers from the school. Of course, they are more willing to listen to the teachers.

The Zhangs feel that if they knew more about the curriculum, and had more communication with the teachers, they would be able to help Yue more with school. In China, the schools use specially-compiled textbooks according to the national curriculum. It is very easy for parents to track what the children are learning at school and through the daily assignments. The students' work is usually sent home for parents to check. Parents who have the ability to tutor their children feel "clear at one glance" about where their children need extra help. However, living in another language and culture, Wang-ling feels that she lives in confusion:

So how Yue is doing at school every day, and what she does not do well or understand well in class everyday, we do not know. We occasionally

find out, for example, what needs to be done in school, but Yue did not know. For example what she needs to bring to school for the next day, she was not very clear. Then we find that she did not understand what the instructions are sometimes.

The evaluation system in Canadian schools is also dramatically different from that in Chinese schools. In Chinese schools, examinations are an important means to test whether students have mastered certain knowledge. Students have examinations after every unit of study in all subjects. The report cards indicate the performance in three important aspects: morality, physique, and most importantly intelligence, which includes the results of the final examination in all subjects. The final examination also indicates a student's position in the class.

The Canadian evaluation system is "refreshing" to Wang-ling. In her opinion, "it is more comprehensive, from the language ability, social ability, the ability to get along with others. And it is concerned with the characteristics of young children." However, the report cards do not satisfy their eagerness to know the details of Yue's progress. Wang-ling explains:

They do not have exams or a positioning system. So I do not know her position in class. The report card says what area she is good or not very good. It is very general. For example, I do not know what is her weak place, in math addition, or subtraction. But it is not simply those matters. There are more important matters such as thinking.

In Zhang-bo's mind, examinations are not only a way to test the mastery of knowledge, but also give a sense of responsibility and discipline. He believes that an appropriate number of examinations actually motivate students to learn:

There are no exams here. It is not very good. If they do exams, then you know that oh, she is not doing well in this aspect. Without exams, students have no pressure at all and are not motivated to learn. Of course, with some pressure, they will study harder. I can understand that no exams for lower grade, but if they have no exam even in higher grades then that is no good.

Wang-ling was very curious about the item on second language in the report card. In her mind, Yue was an ESL learner and the teachers should recognize the fact that her first language is not English. However, in Yue's report cards, her second language (which they assume is French) was identified as N/A. Therefore, they figured out that the teachers assume that English was Yue's first language. Wang-ling felt disappointed that the teachers did not even realize that Yue's first language is Chinese. "At least they should say somewhere there that Chinese is her mother tongue. I will feel better about it," she said to me after she asked me to go through the report cards with her.

Little communication with the school and not enough knowledge of Yue's everyday school life sometimes causes the Zhangs to worry. Many times Yue comes home crying when she has made errors at school. An incident occurred when Yue did not follow the instructions of the teacher and did the

classroom task wrongly. It had happened before and Wang-ling and Zhang-bo finally realized that the problem lay in Yue's English language ability. Yue has been in Canada for almost three years and her English has improved significantly. She can read well and does not have an accent, but she learned English mainly from school and books, and her English language lacks the continuous oral environment of a native English speaker because the Zhangs do not speak English at home. Wang-ling told me in great length what she thought:

We have very little communication with the teachers except the parent-teacher meetings. I think the problem for Yue is that, although she has been here for two years and she has no general language problem now, her comprehension is still not as quick as the Canadian kids. In class, the teacher teaches once and Yue sometimes did not understand or get it. But the teacher apparently is not aware of this. So sometimes, she did not do it right and came home crying. Or sometimes she came home without knowing the right instruction about what to do for some of her activities. What I think is that Yue still has some problem with her listening comprehension. The English she learned mostly very general, learned in class. If the teacher talks about some unfamiliar areas, she still has some problem to understand it. The teacher probably thinks that if other people can understand it she can understand it too. She thinks she is like other Canadian kids, not foreign kids that are nonnative English speakers. I cannot say it is the teacher's fault. She is not an ESL

teacher, who talk to foreign students and who speak succinctly and use simple words. ESL teachers also consider whether students can understand. For schoolteachers, they do not consider those things. We cannot require them to do that.

Wang-ling and Zhang-bo do not feel that they have any power in Yue's education. They think that since English is different from Chinese, then the pedagogy of teaching English must be different as well. "There must be a reason for what they do here." Zhang-bo confided:

I think since every language is different and the ways to teach different languages must be different. For example, in China, it is more basal text method. When the students come home, parents can help their children based on the textbooks, it is clear at a glance. But here they have their own way. My recent understanding is that they will not adapt to us and prepare a textbook for us. We have to adapt to their method. It is reasonable.

Although Wang-ling and Zhang-bo are satisfied with Yue's progress in English, they are concerned about her Chinese. Wang-ling and Zhang-bo have tried to teach her Chinese characters, but progress has been very slow. Yue began to take Chinese lessons from her mother, using the Chinese textbooks they brought from China. Wang-ling taught her writing, but not spelling (Pinyin in Chinese). Yue practised writing the characters in a notebook with square boxes, like all Chinese beginner students do. They have to write in the square boxes to learn how to keep the characters in place. Yue read to me all those

characters she wrote and a sentence that was made from the characters. Her mother emphasized that she could make new sentences with different characters.

Although Yue speaks Chinese, she can not understand stories in Chinese because of the many new words that are not used in their daily life. Wang-ling wants to teach Yue Chinese, so that she can understand the deep and rich Chinese culture and literature. She downloaded from the Internet some Chinese stories written by Singapore primary students, and tried to read the stories to Yue before bedtime, but there were too many words and expressions that Yue could not understand.

Zhang-bo realizes the problem is that Yue does not have a rich oral or written Chinese language environment:

Her Chinese is receding. It's OK with everyday oral conversation. But she has a problem to express her deep feelings in Chinese. I think using a language is the key for it to grow. But for her, she uses Chinese language at home and cannot learn a higher level language. For example, the literary language. How to use some words, the techniques, it is hard to learn. Although Wang-ling sometimes reads to her from the Internet, I am not sure she can learn a lot from it. She does not read Chinese. That is the problem.

They have considered sending Yue to the Chinese Language School on weekends, but have not yet sent her there because when they first came here, they were worried about her English and thought that learning Chinese might

affect her English. Now Yue's English is good, but they have become very busy. As well, their friends, who have children in the language school, have told them that it was not very good. However, they are not going to give up on her Chinese. Wang-ling told me her plan:

Chinese is a difficult problem for me. She cannot read or write Chinese.

My plan is when we are more financially secure, I will send her back to Beijing every summer to study Chinese there. They have all kinds of training camps for overseas children. I will not give up on her Chinese.

Yang Li's School and Home

Yang attended kindergarten only briefly in China before he came to Canada. Without knowing any English, he went directly into grade one. His English has been a concern for Li-yong and Nie-dong since he began school. He did not understand what the teacher said and cried in class, and came home crying almost every day during the first month. In some classroom assignments, although Yang knew a lot in Chinese (for example, about animals), he could not make the teacher recognize his ability because of his language difficulty.

Because of his English difficulty, Li-yong and Nie-dong haven't sent him to the Chinese Language School, although they want him to learn Chinese. They think that learning Chinese will negatively influence his progress in English, and have already identified strong Chinese interference in his spoken English. For example, Yang has little sense of plural forms or the change of

tense in English because there is no tense change in Chinese language. They have decided not to send Yang to learn Chinese or teach him Chinese themselves until his English has reached a certain level. Nie-dong admits that it was not a good thing to stop his training in Chinese, "but we have no choice. Right now his English is not good enough. If we add Chinese to him, it is not good for his English."

Li-yong and Nie-dong have done almost everything they can think of to help him with English. They made English and Chinese flash cards. They typed in two languages all the new words from the books Yang brought home, so that they could practise more at home because the books had to be returned the next day. And they have made him recite the words and copy all the words at least twice every day.

Now that Yang can read, Li-yong does not need to type all the words from the book. They now just ask him to read several times under their supervision because sometimes he gets lazy; he omits reading some of the letters and it is a bad habit. However, they keep up the copying tradition. Li-yong thinks that copying helps Yang learn the words by heart:

It [copying] is based on how I learned Chinese when I was in elementary school. Copying is good for memory. If you read without memorizing, it is no use. Or if you copy without paying attention to the meaning, it is the same thing. I think copying is very beneficial for him. When he first came, I asked him to copy and he copied according to the image. He did not know to separate word from word or leave a space in between.

Sometimes, he copied one letter from one word to another word. Now, he writes word by word and line by line and his writing was very tidy. So copying is effective for him.

Li-yong and Nie-dong do not worry about Yang's creative writing. In their opinion, writing is an accumulative effort. If Yang increased his vocabulary, and could speak fluently in English, he would be able to write creatively. Yang often gives them notes saying things like "Mom and dad, I love you.", which proved to them that if he could speak English and read it, he could write it.

Although Li-yong and Nie-dong try hard to support Yang's study, they do not know whether they are doing it in accordance with the school. One difficulty is that Yang does not have a textbook as he would have had in China. In China, parents check their children's textbooks and know what they are studying at school, providing a two-way communication between home and school. This is not the case in Canada. They find that Canadian teachers have the autonomy to choose the materials they use. The Lis do not think this is necessarily a good thing, as they do not know how the teachers decide on the teaching and learning materials. Coming from a highly structured, basal-text tradition in China, they find the Canadian approach difficult to comprehend. Li-yong spoke on the differences he observed:

They do not teach from syllable to word, then to word combination. What they do here is: today we learn the following words, then all the students do is to learn those words for the day. After school, the students come home to read those words. Or the teachers send some books home for

students to read. It is not very systematic. They should learn from China and compile some textbooks for students.

They also find that the books sent home from school are too glossy and do not have much content – mostly pictures with a line or two of words. They are expensive but not effective. “Unlike Chinese storybooks, these stories did not have social meaning, they are not moral stories that teach lessons about life”. Li-Yong tried to prove his point using the story *Daddy* as an example. The story goes:

Can you see Daddy? Here comes Daddy. Daddy is here.

Look, Daddy, look! Daddy can see Mr. Mugs. Mr. Mugs can run fast.

Come on, Daddy. Run, Daddy, run. See, Daddy run.

Daddy can get Mr. Mugs. Mr. Mugs can get a ball. Get a red ball, Mr.

Mugs!

In the Lis' opinion, stories like this only tell about events, but they do not have strong moral values that have a deeper impact on the readers. To them, reading is to read the world, not just read the words (Freire, 1987).

To the Lis' surprise, there is no homework for Yang except for the two books he brings home every day. In China, there is homework in all the subjects such as math, social studies, and language arts. Chinese people believe that as students move from one subject to another in school, it is impossible to learn each subject in depth in such a limited time; therefore, students need to spend extra time to enhance the classroom learning when they go home. The Canadian approach, as Li-yong understands it, is that

students finish all their exercises in class, and the teacher corrects them right away in class. After school, they emphasize play and do not assign homework.

Not only is there no homework, there are no examinations. In China, students are tested regularly in every subject. Parents know very clearly what their children's strengths and weaknesses are in every subject. The examination results also indicate each student's position in the class. The report cards provide detailed information about each subject. In Canada, the report cards tell very generally about the child's development. Everything looks good but there is a lack of critical analysis of how a child is doing. The purpose is to make a child feel good and build self-esteem. Nie-dong prefers to know more details about her child's progress:

In China, you have tests every week. You know exactly where your child is by looking at the test results. Here the report cards only came once a year, you do not know whether your child is doing well or not. You know approximately where he is at, but I do not know exactly where he is at in class. So there is no pressure for the child. They never had any test. I guess they will have tests in higher grades.

In order to help Yang, Li-yong and Nie-dong asked the teacher to send Yang's work home so that they would have a better idea how to help him. The teacher sent Yang's work home the day they asked, but did not send any work home again. So gradually, the Lis learned that the way it works in Canada is that teachers do not send work home. What is done in school is mostly kept in

school. They find that this approach does not help them. Li-yong provided this comment:

So the approach here is that students do work at school and the work will be kept in school and is not allowed to be taken home. For example, Yang comes home to talk about blue book, pink book, and yellow book. But we had no idea what the books are. So one day he took one of his books home when he was on duty to recycle them, then we know what it was.

According to Yang's parents, the no textbook, no homework, no exam kind of schooling does not seem to be challenging enough for a child's academic development. In China, training in basics, and mastering knowledge in depth, are considered the foundation of any progress. In their opinion, teaching is different in Canada. The teachers pay attention to language learning, play, and crafts. They cover a wide range of materials, and students have a good time, but they do not necessarily learn as much as Chinese students using simple but in-depth textbooks. Nie-dong commented:

I think it is OK for Yang who just came here. It is not good for a normal child. They do not have much training in basics. School is too light and relaxed for them. They do not have strict requirements for the academics. From my own school experience in China, I think in China we emphasize more cramming method of teaching in terms of basics education. The good thing about it is that if they feed more to you, then you learn more.

Here is the kind of relaxed style of teaching. Of course you do not learn as much as you do in China.

The no textbook, no homework, and no exam situation makes the Lis feel uncertain of the best way to help Yang. However, they continue to do what they feel is right, drawing on their own educational experiences in China. They continue every day to teach him math and supervise his reading and copying.

The Lis have little communication with the teachers except for parent-teacher conferences. They do not initiate communication with teachers because they think that the teachers are the authority and they should not challenge them, but rather they should cooperate with them to educate their child. As well, they think their English is not good enough to communicate what they want to say. But Nie-dong wishes that they had more chance to talk to the teachers about what is going on with Yang at school. Most of what they learn about school is from Yang. That is why Nie-dong is very conscious of keeping their mother-son talk every day. She worries that if Yang does not communicate with them, then the link between school and home will not exist. They really like the annual parent-teacher interview, where they can talk face to face with the teacher about Yang's progress at school, but they feel that the conference is too general and just once a year is not enough. Li-yong said, "If they have more communication with parents, they would be able to meet the needs of different children."

Li-yong and Nie-dong have discovered that the differences they experience lay not only in the subject matters but also in extra-curricular

activities. In February, they received a newsletter about the "Readathon" activity at the school, which calls for parents and friends to pay money to the children to encourage them to read more books. It is a contest among all students, and those who pledge the most money for their reading win. When they received the letter, at first they did not know what to do, because "pledge" was a new word for them. They checked in an English-Chinese dictionary and found that it means, "a promise or agreement". From the forms sent home, they knew it had something to do with money. Finally, with the help of one of my professors from the College of Education, they figured that the activity was aimed at collecting money for the books that children read. Li-yong and Nie-dong thought it was ridiculous. In China, schools would never encourage the idea that children should get paid for reading books. It is considered their obligation to read books and to improve their literacy development. If parents or friends were to "pay" children to read books or study, they would create a bad influence on children's morality and sense of responsibility. But the Lis allowed Yang to participate in the activity, and did as the letter required, that is, filled in the forms, and sent in some money. But at home, the rule remained the Chinese way: Yang does not get any money for reading books. Reading the books is his obligation as a student. They gave money to the school because they did not want him to feel left out.

They also observe that in other school activities the school lacked sensitivity to cultural differences. New to this country, they sometimes do not know how to participate in the activities. On Valentine's Day, the teacher asked

all parents to participate in a cake contest in the school. For Chinese families, baking is not part of the culture. They do not know how to bake a cake. But Yang was excited at the contest. So Nie-dong asked me, "Is it okay to buy one? I do not know how to make one." Eventually they bought a cake and entered the contest because they did not want Yang to feel different from the other children.

Nie-dong and Li-yong try their best to support Yang's school activities. When they do not agree with what the school did, they work out ways to deal with it, never challenging the school. Nie-dong explains her resignation:

I never have too much hope for teachers to be aware of the cultural differences. But every time, the letter says we can participate or not participate, for example, to bake a cake for the Valentine. But to make him like other Canadian kids, we are trying to participate in all the activities that require parents to.

These moments put the Lis in a difficult situation and they understand there is always a tension between two cultures. Li-yong explains how he felt and how things were less difficult for him than for Yang:

Those activities, for example Halloween, do not accord with our own cultural values and traditions. But if they hold these kinds of activities and Yang does not participate, it is not good. I am too old to melt into their culture. I am who I am and how I am. For Yang, it is different. He needs to mingle with the children here. So sometimes I explain to Yang that we need to keep our own traditions, although they emphasize that you have to speak English and adapt to their traditions.

The School and Home:

The Meaning of Schooling in the Two Entrepreneurial Families

In this section, I have described Derin Liu's home-school experiences and Amy Ye's first encounter with school. Both children are growing up in their own solitude, and spend little time with their parents. Their parents regard school as the authority for knowledge learning and do not perceive that they have the ability to teach their children because of their own lack of English language ability and their job circumstances. For these two children, home is a world distinctly different from school.

Derin Liu's Home-School Experience

The school Derin attends is an inner city school with a large Aboriginal population. Derin and his sisters and cousins are among the few non-Aboriginal students in the school. Derin is eight years old and in grade one for the third time. He is not fluent in his home language Cantonese or in the school language English. He cannot read or write in either language; he cannot do any math. His mother is worried whether he will be able to go on to grade two.

Derin is afraid of school, and when he gets up in the morning, he does not want to go to school. In school he is bullied and called "China Boy" and gets into fights with other children; it is usually he who is sent home. Kathy his mother regards school as a place for discipline and learning. In China, schools are a place to acquire academic knowledge and teachers take the

responsibility to teach the knowledge needed. Coming from a rural Canton area, Kathy is deeply rooted in the belief that her children are in school to learn knowledge and discipline. The teachers are there to educate her children to be better persons. When Derin was sent home because of fighting with other children at school, she began to realize that schools are not the kind of place she expected. In her opinion, when a child is getting into a fight or gets into trouble, the teachers should try to find out what caused the trouble and try to solve the problem, rather than sending the children home. Kathy questions the school action:

How can a child learn to correct his/her mistake if every time he/she is sent home? School is the place where students' mistakes should be corrected and behavior disciplined. Derin was sent home and said, "I don't care." How can he make any progress when every time it happens he is sent home?

The teachers in the school do not give reasons why he is sent home. Sometimes, Kathy feels that the teachers do not even investigate the matter to do justice to every student involved. One time, Derin was called "China Boy" by other students, got into a fight, later swept all his books off his desk to show his anger at the teacher, and was sent home again. Erin, Jenna, and Lisa, who witnessed part of Derin's fighting, came home and told Kathy that other children were bullying Derin. It was not Derin's fault this time. Kathy suspected that because Derin cannot speak English well, he cannot argue for himself or explain the situation. He was so frustrated and angry that he swept all his

books to the floor in front of the teacher. Apparently the teacher did not investigate who was to blame and assumed it was Derin's fault. Kathy was perplexed at what Western schooling is all about, "I think they treat Chinese kids differently."

Although unhappy things happen to Derin in the school, Kathy still has hope for him and for the school. "I hope he will learn something and gets better." But when the school did several IQ tests on Derin (everything tested in English), the school informed her, through Derin's sister Erin, that the best thing for Derin would be to transfer to another inner city community school, one that consists mainly of Aboriginal students. Derin's school said that they could no longer help him. Kathy was devastated by this message, and in her opinion, transferring to another school would not solve Derin's problem. The perception of Derin as an "at risk" Chinese student would be transferred to the new school as well. With tears in her eyes, she told me:

The new school will wonder why he is transferred. The teachers in the old school will tell the teachers in the new school what a bad child he is, and then the new teachers will treat him the same way. Then it will not do any good for him.

In her opinion, to be transferred to another similar school because of low performance would also do dishonor to the family in the community, "People will laugh at us if they know that our children are not doing well in school."

What Kathy also could not understand was that although Derin was not doing well in his studies, there was little homework for him or for his sisters

who were in the higher grades. In China, every day when she was in school, she had homework in every subject. Homework was a very important part of school life; students spent extra time after school to strengthen their knowledge; the higher the grade, the more homework, especially in the core subjects such as Chinese language, foreign language, math, and science. But in Canada, her children come home without homework, so they play and watch videos. Kathy, who does not have the ability to teach her children, feels hopeless: "I don't know English, I don't know how to teach him. The teachers do not care. They are not strict with kids. I cannot do much at home when there is no homework."

Kathy does not believe that Derin or his sister Fay are special-needs children as the school diagnosed them, based on their tests. She does not know what kind of tests the school used and never saw any test results. She knows they can learn because she has taught them domestic duties at home. Derin, for example, can help with some restaurant work such as setting the tables if he wants to. He can comprehend videos, and can even retell some stories with his broken English. Kathy believes that for Derin and his sister Fay, it is a matter of effort rather than innate ability. Her children are healthy children, and need guidance from school to help them learn. Her belief in effort comes from her own school experience; she suffered from poliomyelitis, but she studied hard, keeping up with all her homework while receiving treatment, and excelled in several subjects.

Derin's sister Fay is Kathy's big concern. Derin is still young and has time to catch up. But Fay is in grade nine, and her school, a comprehensive high school, seems very flexible. Fay sometimes comes home at 1:00 p.m., sometimes 2:00 p.m., and sometimes 3:00 p.m. What she is learning in school, such as home economics and visual arts, does not seem very academic. Kathy wonders whether what Fay is learning will do any good to her future survival in Canadian society, and she wants Fay to learn good English, math, and other courses that will make her a literate person. "I wanted her to learn from my own regrets that I did not learn to read and write English," she told me. The idea of hiring a tutor at home for Fay has occurred to her several times, but they do not know anybody who can do it. Kathy asked me several times whether I could spend some time tutoring Fay.

In February 1999, Kathy requested a meeting with the teacher about Fay's study. She wanted the school to give Fay more challenging courses and to focus on her English language. I helped arrange a parent-teacher meeting. At the three-hour meeting, many issues were discussed. We were told that Fay did not qualify for ESL courses because she was born in Canada, and what she needed was not ESL language training, but a special program to help her to acquire life skills. As a translator and research observer, I realized our discussion was going nowhere because of the East-West educational differences. In the teacher's mind, what Fay was learning were the "core" subjects in her "defined" program of study, that is, a program for special needs students, and Fay was doing well in these subjects. It would be unrealistic to

confront Fay at her literacy level with tasks that she would never be able to master. In the teacher's opinion, Fay would never be employed as a typical person, and she would always work as a kitchen helper at her family restaurant. The teacher asked me, "Tell me, what are their expectations for her? To be employed in another trade like anybody else?"

In Kathy's mind, core subjects for a regular school should include at the very least language, math, and science. Without literacy skills in these areas, it would be difficult to survive in any society. Her own disadvantage is that she was not literate in the English language, but she is literate in Chinese, math and science which she learned in Chinese schools. For Fay, who is not literate in Chinese and is living in an English society, to have training in English is of paramount importance for her future as a social being. Working in their kitchen is not Kathy's aspiration for her daughter; she wants Fay to be able to live and work independently like anybody else.

What Kathy does not understand is that Fay is in a special program in a regular public school. A year ago when Fay's old school recommended that Fay go to a high school for special needs students, the parents went to have a look at the school and did not like it since, in Kathy's opinion, Fay is capable of doing a lot of things. She has learned to do housework and restaurant work; since she is not a disabled or mentally challenged child, what she needs is not to be labeled as special-needs child or treated as one. Rather, she needs more academically challenging school tasks and more patient teachers. In China, only demonstrably handicapped groups such as the blind, profoundly deaf, or

severely retarded children go to special needs school (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). The second reason they did not like the school is that in Chinese culture, it would be a disgrace for the family if their daughter went to a special needs school. So they chose a regular public school and hope the school would provide what Fay needed: a good education. But almost a year went by and Fay did not learn any academic subjects. Kathy's hope burst like a broken bubble, and she cried many times, finally deciding to give up. In our telephone conversation after the teacher-parent meeting, she told me:

After all, she is a girl, eventually she will marry somebody. We will do what we can to teach her at home. The stuff she is learning at home is learning too. As long as she is learning something, let it be.

Kathy's encounters with the schools have thus taken away all her aspirations for her children to excel in school, to go to university, and some day become scholars. Kathy had more education in China than her husband did, was keen to support their children's study, wanted the best for her children, and hoped they would grow up to be traditional Chinese scholars. Her vision of education has been influenced by a Confucian concept of what it is to be a scholar, that is, a highly literate person who reads the classics. Ten years ago, despite her husband's strong objection, she insisted on buying a set of the world's great classics of 100 titles such as *The Encyclopedia Britannica* for her children. Working as a dishwasher for a couple of years, she managed to pay off the charges for the seven cases of books, at \$400 a month. The classics included the most sophisticated readings in all areas -- philosophy,

economics, anthropology, sociology, literature, and theology with writers and thinkers such as Newton, Aristotle, Freud, Marx, Milton, Einstein, Shakespeare, Plato, and Socrates. The books are still in their plastic wrappers, covered with dust. Kathy and Peter can not see any of their children, not even Erin, becoming the kind of scholar they want them to be. The books have proved to be of no benefit to their children and have caused friction between Kathy and her husband. Now, in retrospect, she thinks she could better have spent the money on their restaurant. With tears in her eyes, she showed me cases and cases of books she kept so well and paid so dear a price and asked me to sell them for her. "I cannot stand the stress to see the books piled there every time I walk by them".

Amy Ye's First Encounter with School

Almost three years old, Amy is anxious to go to school and keen to learn all the letters of the English alphabet. Her mother has checked with other Chinese friends and found out that the closest community school has many problem children and serves mainly a disadvantaged population. Also, the school does not have French immersion programs. In Sue's opinion, Canada is a bilingual country, and it is crucial for her children to learn the two official languages that will benefit their future in Canada. She does not want to send Amy to the neighborhood school, and having asked for more information from other Chinese friends, has found another school with a better reputation and better programs. Although it is further from where they live and inconvenient to

their work, they believe they can manage just as they have managed other difficulties in their lives.

Their first encounter with the school demonstrated confusion and difficulty in communicating. It was frustrating for Amy's parents, and, I believe, it was equally frustrating and difficult for the school. Sue phoned the school asking for information and was promised a return call. After waiting for a month, Sue phoned again and was referred to a lady in charge. The lady's secretary promised to phone back, but after a month there was still no phone call. Without knowing how the school system works in Canada, they almost gave up and thought the school did not want their daughter. Finally with help, they got a registration form for the school, and learned that it was too early to register for the fall term. This information was a relief for them. With help, Sue and Tim filled in the form, paid the first month's fee, and were then sure that Amy would be able to attend the desired school.

Although Amy would not start pre-school until September, 1999, Sue and Tim already worried about her studies. They were not sure how Amy would cope with school, and they would not be able to help her with schoolwork as they themselves could not read or write English. Nor would they have much time for her because they had to work at the restaurant, and take care of the other two children. For them, sending children to school means a new worry in their life, but they are positive and full of hope. Sue told me her expectations for Amy, "I hope she will go to university someday."

Home-School Connection: What Does It Mean?

Literacy research on family-school connections suggests that parental involvement in school activities in both home and school can increase student academic achievement (Swap, 1993). The stories of the four families suggest a significant incongruency between home and school contexts in the four Chinese children's literacy lives. Whether in the two entrepreneurial families or in the two academic families whose parents are more literate in Chinese and English, all parents are distanced from their children's school life, have little communication with the teachers, and have little knowledge of what Canadian schooling is all about. Four issues need to be addressed: a) stereotypes, first language, and ESL children, b) socio-economic status and school performance, c) cultural values and schooling, d) the missing link and cross-cultural learning.

Stereotypes, First Language, and ESL Children

Asian children are often portrayed as "model students" (Lee, 1996; McKay & Wong, 1996). The four children's stories do not support the stereotype that all Asian immigrant children are high achievers (Jensen & Inouye, 1980; Schneider & Lee, 1990). Three of the focal children Yue, Yang, and Derin, are not among the highest academic achievers. Yue and Yang are doing well in school and are "good children" who do not make trouble, but they often come home crying because of their mistakes in schoolwork. Derin is one of the lowest achievers according to his school's classification and is frequently sent

home for his misconduct at school. Thus, even within one ethnic culture there are different kinds of children in terms of their academic achievements. As my study illustrates, there are children like Yue and Yang, and there are also children like Derin. Lee (1996) points out that the stereotype of Asian students as model minority is dangerous because this image promotes invisibility and disguises many children's problems. The image of model students, as Olsen (1997) states, is "a destructive myth" for many children the schools are failing.

None of the four children attends the ESL program offered by the Saskatoon School Board either because the parents did not know about it or if they knew about it, chose not to. The parents in the two academic families were not aware that there was an ESL program available. They heard about it from other people, but nobody from their schools had ever told them. They concluded that if the teachers did not recommend or mention it, it must not be necessary. Derin and his sisters did not go to ESL programs although their parents requested the schools to place them in such a program; they were told that because the children were born in Canada, they did not qualify.

The four children's (and Fay's) fluency in their first language Chinese (or Cantonese) differs. Yue and Yang who were born in China have more background in their first language Chinese. Derin, Fay, and Amy, who are children of immigrants, were born in Canada, but have had limited exposure to Chinese (and/or English). As my study suggests, though living in a Canadian society, Derin and his sisters, who are typical second-generation or third-generation children, are living in the sub-culture of their ethnic community and

have acquired limited first language. My study seems to suggest a link between the children's first and second language acquisition. Children with more capability and experiences in their first language seem to do better in their second language learning. Children with limited exposure to their first language may experience more difficulty in their second language learning. Therefore, schools need to recognize the reality of this "multi-ethnic ideology" the children live in (Banks, 1981). More importantly, schools need to try to understand the children's language contexts to meet the needs of these children of immigrants such as Derin and his sisters, who have not fully developed their language ability in either their first or second language.

Socio-economic Status and School Performance

The socio-economic status of families and its relationship to children's school performance has been widely researched. Heath (1983) studied a Black, working-class community, Roadville, and a White working-class community, Trackton in the Piedmonts of the U.S.A. Lareau (1989) compared the White, working-class community Colton with the White, upper-middle-class community Prescott in the U.S.A.. Both researchers concluded that social class affects parental involvement in their children's schooling. Lareau concluded that working-class parents view the school as responsible for educating their children and do not supervise, compensate for, or intervene in the school programs; upper-middle-class parents are closely connected with the school and actively supervise, supplement, and intervene in their children's education.

However, my study demonstrates that for the four families, despite their socio-economic status, the relationship between home and school is characterized by separation and a lack of communication. This finding differs from Lareau's (1989) research in that the relationship between the working-class families and the school is characterized by separation while upper-middle-class parents forge relationships characterized by scrutiny and interconnectedness.

The term social class is problematic in my study. Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991) argue that social class is a summary label for a variety of complex components including "parental education, occupational status, income, housing conditions, time allocation, attitudes toward school and schooling, experiences with school, expectations for future educational and occupational success, nature of the family's social network, and style of parent-child interaction" (pp. 3-4). It is difficult to place a social class label to the four families in this study. None of the four families is wealthy enough to be considered middle class. Immigration may have lifted the economic status of the two entrepreneurial families, who had less than high school education, were workers in China, and now own their own businesses in Canada. On the contrary, although immigration has degraded the economic class of the two academic families who were middle-class in China and are living on the margin of the economic ladder in Canadian society, their economic status is temporary as they are part of an intellectual elite and likely hold the cultural values of the intellectual class. The Zhang family live on the wages of the wife's sewing factory work, while the Li family live on the

husband's teaching assistantship and the wife's wages as a lab assistant. Both families live in crowded apartments trying to get by month by month. However, according to the folk theory among Chinese graduate students, they are considered to be the "middle-class-in-the-making". They live in the hope that this situation is transitory and after the husbands finish their degrees, they will find a good job and the family will be financially comfortable and become one of the so-called middle-class.

Educational and occupational differences, the most important components of social class, have a significant impact on parental values about education. Lareau (1989) suggests that parents' educational and occupational status influences their willingness to participate in their children's schooling – "social class differences in family life can help or hinder individuals in their effort to meet the standards of school" (p. 5). In my study, although the four families support their children in their own ways and have high expectations for their children, their levels of involvement with their children's education vary. The parents in the two academic families, similar to the upper middle class families in Lareau's study, actively supervise and teach their children using knowledge from their own educational experiences in China. The parents in the two entrepreneurial families share values similar to those of Lareau's working-class families. The Liu parents, for example, do not teach or supervise their children at home, and consider teachers responsible for education.

My interpretation of the differences in the two types of families is that it is not economic class, but educational levels and job circumstances that shape

the parents' expectations for and involvement in schooling. These two factors (the educational and occupational) as indicators of human capital in Coleman's (1988, 1990, 1991) theory of family capital are determinants of the children's home literacy acquisition experiences. The differences in their education and occupation status result in differences in parent involvement, and shape the resources that parents have at their disposal to assist their children, and the life chances that result from their access to those resources. That is the families differ in the cultural resources they possess and the activation and investment of the resources into cultural capital that is useful for their children's education (Lareau, 1989). In the two academic families, the parents possessed "cultural capital" acquired through Chinese family and the education system, supported with Canadian university education and network of graduate students (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore, they are able to teach their children in their Chinese ways. The parents, particularly the mothers in the two academic families, are avid English language learners, and willing to teach their children the best they can and improve English themselves. In the entrepreneurial families, the highest education the parents attained was grade twelve in China; none of them had formal education in Canada. They are able to draw on their experiences to detect some differences between the Eastern and Western education systems, but are not familiar with the cultural capital of the education system in their home country and do not have the confidence to teach their children. Therefore, they rely on the school to educate their children,

particularly the English language with which they have little familiarity as readers, writers, or speakers.

The fathers in the two academic families are pursuing graduate degrees in Canada, while the two entrepreneurial families are living in a world distant from the academic world. The children in the academic families engage in the work of their parents: they are at the periphery of academic work and observe its associations; the children in the entrepreneurial families are on the periphery of restaurant work and observe its associations and demands. Thus, the children in the academic families are familiar with the cultural capital and "the culture of literacy" (Purcell-Gates, 1996), that is, books, homework, and technology, of the educational institutions in both countries. It is easier for them to adapt to the literacy environment of the school. Purcell-Gates (1996) illustrates:

They already know, or acquire implicitly as they develop, the varying registers of written language with the accompanying "ways of meaning" and "ways of saying," the vocabulary, the syntax, the intentionality. This makes learning the "new" so much easier. (pp. 182-183)

For the children in the entrepreneurial families, none of the parents had formal schooling in Canada. They live in a family culture that is not associated with print and academic discourses; therefore learning to read and write is not a natural but a foreign concept for them. Purcell-Gates (1996) explains:

Their social and cultural lives do not support this effort but rather exist separately and often compete with it. From the beginning they are

challenged to learn a code that some of them may not even have realized existed before....The language and purposes for print encountered through formal education are foreign. The vocabulary is too hard and removed from their daily lives; the convoluted syntax of exposition and complex fiction is unfathomable. Without a great deal of support and motivation, their level of literacy skill attainment is bound to be low compared with that of their peers who are natives of the more educated literate world. (p. 183)

The parents' job circumstances also affect the extent to which they can support their children's learning. In the two academic families, the husbands are graduate students, with flexible daytime schedules. The wives work fulltime during the day and can devote all their after work time to their children while their husbands work on their university studies. For example, Yue's mother chose to work in the sewing factory rather than in a restaurant in order to spend more time with her daughter during evenings and weekends. However, the Liu and the Ye parents have had little flexibility, working at several jobs and at different shifts to make a living in their early days in Canada. Now operating their own restaurants, they must devote all their time to their work, struggling to maintain their businesses in a low socio-economic neighborhood. The two entrepreneurial families are confined to their restaurants and do not have the freedom to choose what they did. Neither family can afford to employ restaurant help. The two mothers both wish for more time with their children and for

themselves to learn English. Unfortunately their socio-economic circumstances do not allow for this kind of activity.

Although family cultural capital influences the parents' involvement in their children's schooling, none of the four families has established an interconnected relationship with the schools or has actively participated in the school milieu. These Chinese immigrant parents do not know how to supplement or intervene in the schooling and do not have the power or resources to do so in a society that is different from that of their home country. The parents have the cultural and educational beliefs they brought from their past experiences in their home country, are unfamiliar with Canadian schools, and do not have sufficient English language to communicate with the schools. And it maybe equally true that school personnel do not understand the differences in the children's home literacy values, nor do they comprehend that the parents lack the ability and power to initiate communications.

Cultural Values and Schooling

Literacy is grounded in specific cultural values (Dubin, 1992). Even though the four families differ in their literacy practices at home, they share common cultural values inherited from their home country. The parents' conception of what it means to be literate is rooted in the Confucian philosophy that has been the core of education throughout Chinese history. Literacy in Chinese history has served as a vehicle for upward social mobility and to "Tao", the "sum total of truths about universe and man, which should govern the mind

and the acts of both individuals and the state" (X. Li, 1996, p. 116). The central idea of the Confucian concept of literacy is "wen", which emphasizes the ability to draw on classic literature. Kathy Liu, educated in the Confucian Chinese tradition, hopes that her children will grow up being literate and being able to read the Western classics; so, working as a dishwasher, she bought for them a whole set of world classics, and the Encyclopaedia Britannica. The schools and teachers in Canada would never have recommended these purchases; instead, Canadian teachers would have recommended that she purchase children's picture books to help foster her children's interests in reading.

The Confucian notion of literacy influences the way literacy is learned and taught. Chinese education emphasizes rote memory of texts. Memorizing from books, copying, and imitating are considered the ways to acquire literacy. In the first stage of language learning, correct spelling, good pronunciation, and standard grammar are emphasized. And throughout the educational system, students are encouraged to spend time in and after school on homework, doing practice exercises, reciting and copying the texts to enhance school learning. These activities are exercised through individual solitary exploration, without the need for collaboration or socialization with others. The characteristics of Chinese ways of literacy and schooling are reflected in Wood's (1999) description of the traditional schools that parents of Chinese descent are battling for in Vancouver:

Traditional schools tend to be organized with their desks in rows--not in study groups. Students also work more on their own, and less on co-

operative projects (at Surrey Traditional, individual achievement is rewarded at annual ceremony organized by parents). Phonics makes up a larger--though by no means exclusive--part of the reading curriculum than most public schools. Homework is assigned nightly in *every* class. (Wood, 1999, p. 35, *Italics original*)

These traditional ways to literacy are reflected in the structured, text-bound approach the two academic families work with their children. Yue's parents require her not only to be able to read the books but also to draw on what she has read. The Confucian way is evident in how Li-yong helps Yang's English; Yang is asked to copy words and sentences from the books and to recite the books. His parents are strict with his spelling and grammar training.

Schooling in China is also influenced by Confucius' concept of "ren" (benevolence), which "consists of control over oneself in conformity with the rules of propriety, that is, the Rites" (Zhao & Guo, 1990, p. 56). Under Confucian ideology of self-control and rule-governance, schooling in China is characterized by individual learning rather than social learning. Chinese schooling encourages individual efforts, formality, and discipline, but not creativity or individuality. Learning is considered a serious human activity that has to do with knowledge gain, and any games or imaginative, creative activities, or social activities are considered as not serious and not desirable for academic learning. Based on their own educational values from China, the parents of the families question Canadian education. In the two academic families -- the Zhangs and the Lis -- the parents question the coherence,

planning, and depth of the curriculum, textbooks, homework, and examinations by comparing them with what they know about Chinese schooling. The Zhangs question the value of drawing activities for literacy learning, and the Lis question the lack of moral values in Canadian stories, which seem to them to be learning within a meaningless context. They question the cultural activities that are in conflict with their cultural values. The Li's reaction to the readathon pledging money activity is a good example of how their literacy practices are embedded in their Confucian tradition.

The Liu family question the role of schooling in Canadian society. In their mind, school is the place for knowledge and discipline, where the children become better students, and change from being ignorant to being learned. In Confucian philosophy, "knowledge learning is rule learning" (Su, 1995, p. 72). The role of traditional schooling includes "a package of rules and expectations" for its students (Wood, 1999, p. 35). However, the Liu family's encounter with schools proves that the agenda of the schools is not congruent with their desires to learn the "rules". Derin is often sent home from school and is not welcome in the school and Fay was placed in a special program that encourages no academic learning.

Another fundamental cultural difference lies in the Eastern and Western beliefs as to what counts as the determinant of school success. As Stevenson and Stigler (1992) document, the West believes that innate ability is the key factor that affects a child's success, while according to the Confucian philosophy in the East, effort is considered as the road to success. In Chinese

culture, it is believed that innate ability is given by birth and cannot be changed. But through continuous effort, people with low innate ability can achieve the same as people who are “born smart”. The classic effort story known to all Chinese people is about a simpleton who moved a mountain through determined effort. The Lius believe that their children may be slow learners, but they could improve through motivation and the efforts of both the school and home. Apparently the school does not share the same optimism as the family for their children and labeled them as low innate ability children who need special programs based on the predefined IQ tests that are in English. Fay's school and teachers did not even want to give Fay a chance to study English as requested by her mother.

The Missing Link and Cross-cultural Learning

There is a consensus among researchers that building parent-school partnership in education is not only beneficial but also crucial to students' academic achievement, especially for minority children (McCaleb, 1994; Swap, 1993). Active parental involvement in schooling can improve students' self-esteem, affirm their sense of personal and cultural identity, and motivate them to learn new knowledge by building on existing “funds of knowledge” from their home culture (Moll, 1992). Active parental involvement can also inform parents of the school life of their children and therefore empower them to better support their children's learning.

In my study, the four families' stories indicate that there exists a gap between the theory and practice of school-home partnership; the families had little communication with the schools besides the annual routine parent-teacher interview, newsletters, and report cards. They know little about Western schooling and about what their children are doing at school. The parents are trying their best to facilitate their children's learning in their own ways, hoping it would be relevant to their learning at school. They have experienced frustration, doubt, anger, and tears, but coming from a Confucian society that respects schools and teachers as the authority of knowledge, the parents do not challenge the schools. On the other hand, rooted in their institutional beliefs, the schools and teachers of the four families do not try to understand them or make any initiative to communicate with them. Therefore, the link between theory and practice in education, between school and home, is missing. As Ryan & Adams (1995) illustrate, the result is that:

the culture had set the home and the school, the two main developmental contexts of childhood, into separate spheres and erected powerful barriers between them....Parents and teachers hewing to their separate roles with only a minimum contact with each other across the family-school boundary. (p. 3)

The school-home dichotomy can bring psychological and cognitive damage to children's development. Literacy researchers stress two urgent missions of the schools: a) the need for minority students to have a solid foundation and competence in their first language and culture to become

functionally bilingual and competent in their second language; and b) the need for their cultural experiences to be reflected through culturally-sensitive curricula and pedagogy in the school and classroom (Cummins, 1986; Danesi, 1989; Fuzessey, 1998). If the schools fail to do so, one of the major consequences is to send a cognitive and social deficit message to the children and hence nurture in them a low esteem about their parents, their community, and eventually about themselves. Their home culture and language may be perceived as negative baggage contradictory to what is valued in schools (G. Li, 1998). In the present study, the psychological and cognitive consequences are already visible in the lives of the four children: Yue comes home crying, having been accused by the teacher of not studying hard or not being able to understand the teacher's instructions; Yang comes home crying asking his mother whether Chinese people are stupid; Derin hates school and does not care whether he is sent home or called "China Boy" anymore. He was afraid to learn anything, he simply says, "I can't"; Derin's sister is always very timid and has low confidence in herself.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described the four families' conceptions of and encounters with Canadian schools, and discussed four issues concerning the connections between home and school literacy practices. The issues are stereotyping, policy and ESL children, socio-economic status and school

performance, cultural values and schooling, and the missing link and cross-cultural learning.

The stories of the four families indicate that the parents support their children's schooling in their own ways. In the two academic families, the parents homeschool their children following their Chinese educational traditions. In the entrepreneurial families, the parents perceive that they could not teach, but they could provide moral support for their children. The differences in ways of supporting children in the two types of families are not simply a result of economic status, but are more complex, related to parents' educational background and their job circumstances. These factors result in differences in the parents' ability to be involved in their children's education and their own willingness and chances to become fluent in English. Coming from different cultural and educational backgrounds, all the families have experienced fundamental cultural differences between East and West education. There is a lack of communication between parents and schools and teachers; and there exists a gap between the home and school lives of the children. The family-school dichotomy brings a negative impact on the children's cross-cultural learning.

In this chapter, I have discussed the issue of home-school connection that concerns most of the four families. I have analyzed the stereotypes and first language, socio-economic status, and cultural conflicts in the children's school encounters. The four families have demonstrated some commonalities as well as differences in their cross-cultural living. To better illustrate their

commonalties and differences, in the next chapter, I will further interpret their lived experiences with themes emerging from Chapters Four and Five. These themes include home environment and literacy development, social integration and literacy, and media influence on literacy learning.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FAMILY LITERACY AND LIVING: AN INTERPRETATION

In Chapter Six, I have described and interpreted the connections between home and school as perceived by the families. The families' encounters with Canadian schools demonstrate that they have some common experiences because of their shared cultural heritage, and some different experiences due to their different socio-cultural experiences in Canada. In this chapter, I relate these findings to the families' experiences as described in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. I will focus on three themes: 1) home environment and literacy development; 2) social integration and literacy; 3) media influence and literacy.

This study suggests that the physical and social environments of the four Chinese families are significantly different, and are important factors affecting their children's literacy development. In both the academic families and the entrepreneurial families, their literacy and living is characterized by social isolation and ethnic solidarity. Factors such as the geographic location in which they reside hinder their integration into mainstream Canadian society. The influence of media is also prominent in the four families. However, media engagement in the two academic families is significantly different from that in the two entrepreneurial families.

To better explain the influences of family environment on children's learning and the parents' role in the children's literacy development at home, I have used Coleman's (1988, 1990, 1991) theory of family capital as a framework to interpret the family environment and literacy development in the four families. As reviewed in Chapter Two, Coleman's theory includes three distinct components of family background: physical or financial capital, that is, the material resources that can be measured by family income and wealth; human capital, that is, the individual's level of educational attainment embodied in a person's knowledge, skills, and capabilities to act in certain social structures; and social capital, the social relationships that exist in the family and between the community and the family. Coleman emphasizes that social capital is central in the family environment, and other forms of family capital such as physical or financial capital and parental human capital are not pertinent to children's educational development if they are not culminated by social relations in the family. Only when parents use their economic and human capital effectively as resources in their parental roles does the presence of other forms of capital become significant to their children's educational attainment. Therefore, it is social capital, not human capital or financial capital, that determines whether a family environment will have a positive impact on children's educational outcomes and social behaviors (Wong, 1998, p. 5). Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) have further differentiated the social relationships in the family as within-family social capital and between-family social capital, that is, the influence of the community.

Since I have discussed cultural capital (social resources activated by the family for social advantages and educational success) in Chapter Six, I will first focus the discussion in this section on physical capital and "within-family social capital" (parent-child relationship) and their relationships with the children's literacy acquisition. Then I will discuss "between-family social capital" (relationships between family and other social institutions) in the sections on social integration and media. The extent of social integration into Canadian society and media dominance in the lives of the families may have strongly influenced each other. Media such as videos, if used effectively, can become valuable family capital; whereas, if used excessively, media can have a negative impact on children's literacy and learning. Because cultural capital permeates other forms of capital in the families, I will include the discussion of cultural capital with the other forms of capital.

Home Environment and Literacy Development

In Chapter Two, my literature review of family literacy practices indicates that family environment, either physical or social, has a strong impact on children's literacy development. The findings in my study are consistent with this conclusion. The four families in my study have significantly different physical and social literacy environments, yet these environments have had a great impact on the four children's literacy development. The differences in physical capital in the four families are not a reflection of the quality of their home literacy environments. The quality of home literacy environment is determined by other

forms of family capital including factors such as literacy opportunity (the richness of print and opportunities to be involved in literacy activities), instruction (guidance by an experienced reader, writer, or speaker), cooperation (children's and parents' motivation and actions), and social-emotional quality (affective experiences in interactions) (Lesman & Jong, 1998). In this section, I will demonstrate that there are significant differences in family capital in terms of the quality of the home environment in the four families.

Physical Capital, Print, and Literacy Acquisition

My study concludes that physical capital is not the crucial factor that influences what the families do with literacy. Though the families differ in their physical or financial capital, the difference does not determine the children's literacy acquisition. More physical capital does not guarantee more active literacy acquisition. My research shows that only when physical capital of the family becomes a resource for cognitive development such as knowledge about print and other forms of visual representation, acquisition of scripts and concepts, and the development of social competence can it benefit children's literacy learning process. The acquisition of literacy requires children to have opportunities to have contact with print, and to observe others' such as their parents' reading and writing activities. Lesman & Jong (1998) point out that children's construction of knowledge about literacy is determined by the degree to which the home environment provides opportunities for interactions with reading and writing. Therefore, literacy opportunities in the home are important

indicators of the family capital that the families possess. Researchers such as Teale (1986) and Spreadbury (1994) have suggested that not only the availability, but also the appropriateness of print materials in the home environment are significant for children's literacy acquisition. Children's books, for example, are necessary resources for children to develop interests and positive attitudes towards literacy learning. Regardless of their physical space, the quality of the home literacy environment among the four families can be easily detected through the availability of print materials and the appropriateness of the materials in their environment.

For the two academic families, the Zhangs and the Lis, their living space is inadequate, by Canadian standards. The Zhangs live in a two-bedroom apartment, while the Lis live in a one-bedroom apartment without a living room. They do not possess many valuable material objects. In the Zhang family, the most valuable possessions are the computer, piano, and TV. The Lis' most valuable possessions are the TV, VCR, and the electric keyboard. They do not have enough space for sitting; however, their constrained space is rich with print. Both apartments are full of print materials of all kinds, including children's books from the libraries and schools, Chinese textbooks, workbooks from the bookstores, parents' textbooks and notebooks from their university studies, Biblical materials, newspapers, children's drawings, pens and pencils, and crayons. Yue Zhang and Yang Li are immersed in print and their home environment provides many opportunities for them to become involved with

reading, writing, drawing, and other forms of literacy activities and to see their parents engage in literacy activities.

The living conditions of the two entrepreneurial families are better than those of the two academic families. The houses of the entrepreneurial families are more spacious and better furnished. The Lius and the Yes live in their own homes and they are financially better off with their family businesses. However, their home environments are characterized by a lack of print. In Derin Liu's home, there are very few books accessible to the children. And Amy Ye's restaurant home does not have any kind of print accessible to children except the menus on the writing board and a couple of ragged books in a cardboard box on a shelf that stores some old toys. Although Derin and Amy are exposed to spoken English respectively through watching videos and interacting with English speaking customers, their home settings do not have a variety of opportunities to become involved with reading and writing activities such as reading children's books, scribbling on papers, or drawing with crayons.

The differences in physical capital among the four families may partially explain the success of Yue Zhang's and Yang Li's English acquisition and Derin Liu's failure to learn either his first or second language. According to Teale & Sulzby's (1989) theory of child literacy acquisition, reviewed in Chapter Two, literacy learning begins early in learners' exposure to and engagement with print in real life situations in their home and community environment. Yue Zhang's and Yang Li's home environment, characterized by rich print materials, is beneficial in fostering the children's literacy acquisition in second language

learning, particularly their writing and reading comprehension (Lee & Croninger, 1994). Derin Liu's home literacy, characterized by lack of accessibility to print, is not favorable for fostering familiarity with and knowledge of print, and consequently, not beneficial for learning of any language. And under the child literacy acquisition theory, I anticipate that though Amy is very fluent in oracy, she may have more difficulty in adapting to school literacy environment than do her peers from print-rich homes.

Within-Family Social Capital, Parental Involvement, and Literacy Acquisition

McLane & McNamee (1990) point out that the environment includes not only physical surroundings but also human relationships that determine when, how often, and in what situations children are introduced to the tools, materials, uses, and meanings of literacy. The social relationships among family members, particularly between parents and children, are important factors influencing the children's literacy development. Within the families, these relationships are embodied in the parent-child interactions in family literacy activities and parental support and involvement in children's learning at home. Parent-child interactions in learning activities are a form of social capital that strengthens the parent-child bond, increases both parents' and children's expectations, and facilitates children's school academic performance (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998).

The literature review in Chapter Two reveals that parents influence children's language learning mainly through two family literacy activities:

parent-child oral communication and parent-child shared story-book reading. My research findings contradict these literacy values which tend to be appropriate for Euro-centric, middle-class families. First, in all four families, parent-child communication is conducted primarily in their first language, Chinese. Although the oral communication in Chinese can facilitate children's communicative competence, it cannot help children acquire vocabulary or knowledge of speech in their second language, English. Oral communication only indirectly facilitates the children's English learning. Second, my research indicates that parent-child, shared-book reading is not a part of family literacy practices for the four participating families. In Chinese culture, book reading is considered to be an individual effort or individual solitary exploration. None of the parents consider their own English good enough to read aloud to/with their children. In the two entrepreneurial families, especially the Ye family, the parents themselves do not have a reading habit in any language and they certainly do not read to their children. In the Liu family, Kathy reads in Chinese, but she never reads to her children. In the two academic families, parent-child book reading is more a parent-supervising-child model, not a shared model. Parents' role is a management role, that is, making sure the child reads and reads correctly. Yang Li's parents supervise his reading and make sure he does not omit sounds or sentences. Therefore, the nature of the shared reading in these two families is different from the shared reading activities in Euro-centric middle class families, where parents offer verbal responses regarding vocabulary, contextual meaning, and the structure of the stories, thus

encouraging the enjoyment of reading through experiencing stories. Therefore, I conclude that oral communication in the families is the means of preserving the first language and culture, indirectly facilitating the children's second-language acquisition. The parents in my study influence their children's second-language literacy learning through family literacy activities such as direct supervision and monitoring or moral support, rather than oral communication and parent-child shared storybook reading.

The existing research on Chinese parents' roles in their children's academic achievement whether in China (Lin & Chen, 1995), in the United States (Jiang, 1997), or in Canada (Zhang, Ollila, & Harvey, 1998) indicates that Chinese parents have very high aspirations for their children, are willing to sacrifice and try their best to meet their academic needs, and are able to support their children's literacy development by monitoring home activities conducive to learning. My research questions this uniform view of Chinese parents. The parents' roles in the children's literacy learning in the four Chinese families are significantly different. Although all parents are supportive of their children's education, not all parents choose to initiate home literacy activities that would be beneficial to learning because of factors such as their educational level or their job circumstances. The parents in the academic families seem to be more similar to the Chinese parents discussed in the above studies than do the parents in the entrepreneurial families.

My study supports Guthrie & Greaney 's (1991) conclusion that distinctive social contexts prescribe qualitatively different literacy activities. The quality of

the parent-child relationship can be judged by the time that parents spend with their children, the subjects that parents discuss with their children, the types of books that parents share with their children, the amount of interactions between parents and children, and the purposes for shared reading and writing. R. L. Taylor (1995) concludes from his study on home literacy in Icelandic homes that parents can provide a variety of family activities that are conducive for children's literacy development. These activities include regular family use of public libraries, parental modeling of reading and writing, parent-child shared reading, practical reading such as reading the flyers and writing such as making shopping lists, parental support of school such as checking and helping with homework, parent-child verbal interactions, and other leisure activities that promote parent-child relationships such as shared television watching. In the two entrepreneurial families, these kinds of shared family literacy activities are limited. In the Liu family, the parents, especially Derin's mother Kathy, do read and write in Chinese for practical purposes and for leisure. However, they are busy working in the restaurant and seldom spend time with their children. Derin Liu spends much of his after school time watching videos. He is left alone in a crowd among his sisters and cousins in their home with five TVs and VCRs. Growing up with television, he seldom has the opportunity to engage in two-way, interactive, language practice. Nor has he experienced other literacy activities such as going to the library, the bookstore, the zoo, or a museum. In the Ye family, though the parents do have some reading and writing (e.g. Tim writes the menus, and reads *The StarPhoenix*

classified ads), and are present all the time with their children, they do not engage in shared literacy activity with them. According to Coleman (1991), an adult's presence in the home is a necessary condition for children's learning, but it is not a sufficient condition. He postulates that "social capital in the family that is available to aid children's learning is not merely the presence of adults in the household, but the attention and involvement of adults in children's learning" (p. 8).

On the contrary, in the two academic families, social capital is embodied in a variety of shared family literacy activities, consistent with R. L. Taylor's (1995) exhaustive list of recurrent shared family literacy activities. Yue Zhang's family and Yang Li's family share many activities and many of their outings are learning-oriented, family activities. For example, both families' weekly grocery shopping is an activity that provides exposure to print language and promotes family unity; their other family outings include regular visits to public libraries and bookstores. At home, the parents are diligently studying and learning, and are avid readers. They influence their children through "parental modeling of reading". Both families share practical reading at home including reading flyers and junk mail. In both families, verbal interactions at home are encouraged. Other shared family literacy activities include family television use such as watching *Ally McBeal* or *Speed* or watching Chinese shows together, and writing activities such as writing letters to grandparents in China. Parental support of school is an important part of family shared activity, which I have

addressed separately in Chapter Six and will touch upon again from the social capital theory perspective later in this section.

The difference in the family literacy activities between the academic families and the entrepreneurial families may also provide an explanation for the rapid progress of Yue Zhang and Yang Li's reading and writing abilities in English and Derin Liu's underdevelopment in either his first or second language. Through their shared literacy activities with parents, the children in the academic families construct their knowledge about literacy and develop their "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1986) with the scaffolding of their parents. They are, as I pointed out in Chapter Six, acquainted with different peripheries of "culture of literacy" from the children in the entrepreneurial families. Wong (1998) illustrates:

Family life styles and consumption patterns are a critical source of children's cultural formation, which, in turn, provides valuable educational resources that foster children's motivation to learn and academic performance. Through activities, such as regular visits to theaters, concerts, galleries, and libraries, or through access to books, classical music, and other resources at home, the parents' cultural capital establishes the intellectual climate for children's educational aspirations, motivation to achieve, and performance in schools. (p. 5)

For Derin Liu and his sister Fay Liu, their family lifestyle is not favorable for providing opportunities to foster their motivation to learn. They are not exposed to different forms of literacy or cultural opportunities because the

parents do not have time or the English language ability to do so. Therefore, the cultural capital of their parents is not cultivated to establish an intellectual climate for learning and the "culture of literacy" remains alien to the children. Since Derin does not get exposure to a variety of English literacy and cultural experiences, except children's videos, school becomes an important place where he could be immersed in English language and develop his second-language literacy skills through school-related opportunities (Lee & Croninger, 1994). Derin probably needs more language support such as ESL sessions than other children in the study, and he is eligible for ESL classes according to 1991 Saskatchewan *Language Arts Curriculum* and 1995 Saskatchewan *English as a Second Language Teacher's ESL Welcoming Document Kindergarten to Grade 8*. However, the teachers in the school, who know that Derin and his sisters do not qualify for special funding because they were born in Canada, seem incapable of providing them with special language assistance. Thus, if the schools fail to recognize the needs of children from families like Derin Liu's, and fail to provide sufficient literacy support for them, children like Derin and Fay will not likely grow up literate because there is not enough language support from either the families or the schools.

Besides family literacy activities, differences in family capital is also present in parental support and involvement in children's learning at home. Researchers have documented that the kind and quality of parental involvement with children affects the degree of school success (Watson, Brown & Swick, 1983). Quality parental support and involvement includes at least four

components: actual or perceived expectations for school performance, verbal encouragement or interactions regarding schoolwork, direct reinforcement of improved academic performance, or general academic guidance (Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum, & Aubey, 1986). In the four families of my study, the degree of parental support and involvement differs significantly.

In the four families, all parents had actual and perceived aspirations for their children's performance in school. All parents put high value on their children's education and hope their children will grow up literate in English and will go to university to receive higher education. All parents offer moral support to their children's learning both at home and school. But not all parents are involved with their children's learning in terms of the four components listed above. As I concluded in Chapter Six, the educational levels and the employment circumstances of the parents (cultural capital) shape their involvement in their children's learning. The parents, who are from different educational backgrounds, hold different beliefs towards their roles in their children's academic learning at home. Similar to McGillicuddy-DeLisi's (1982) findings as summarized in Chapter Two, the academic parents demonstrate differences in awareness of their children's academic development, their confidence in their own ability to teach their children, the frequency of direct instruction on various academic subjects, and sensitivity to the cross-cultural factors than do the entrepreneurial parents.

These differences result in different approaches the parents use to teach or instruct their children. In the two academic families, the parents are

active supporters (Watson, Brown, & Swick, 1983). They are highly educated and work regular hours, with one parent in each family having a flexible schedule. This flexibility enables them to spend more time with their children. Moreover, the parents are not only actively exerting their influence by supporting learning, but also involving themselves in the learning activities. They are able to teach their children different subjects at home, help their children with schoolwork, support their extracurricular interests, and take them to different kinds of social activities. They encourage them to study hard either verbally or through their own action; they can directly supervise them and offer them academic guidance. On the other hand, in the two entrepreneurial families, the parents are passive supporters (Watson, Brown, & Swick, 1983). In the Liu family, the parents Peter and Kathy do not have much schooling in either Chinese or English, and they spent most of their time in their restaurant apart from their home where their children spend most of their time. Peter and Kathy spend little time with their children, especially Derin who is the youngest. Derin is left alone to watch videos. There is little interaction between his parents, sisters, and him. Therefore, the opportunity to generate social capital to facilitate any kind of achievement is greatly reduced. Derin's parents can not teach him at home, offer him academic guidance, or get involved with his schoolwork, nor do they arrange for tutoring or creative babysitting. In the Ye family, although Tim and Sue are present with Amy all the time in their restaurant, they do not engage with her in any deliberate learning activities. Even if Amy goes to pre-school in September 1999, they cannot support her

learning English as they themselves are beginning learners of English. Therefore, the social capital that develops through their interactions is not a direct resource to facilitate Amy's learning.

Thus, the two academic families are able to activate and invest more social capital that is directly linked with the children's academic learning than do the two entrepreneurial families. This social capital is another factor that might contribute to the success of Yue Zhang and Yang Li and the underdevelopment of Derin Liu. It can be concluded that the activation and investment of social capital is important in children's academic achievement (Lareau, 1989). Within-family social capital can be a beneficial resource when it is established through active parent-child interactions through learning-oriented family literacy activities, and when parents are not only financial and moral supporters, but also educators, learners, and active participants of children's learning process. As Coleman (1988) points out, "if human capital possessed by parents is not complemented by social capital embodied in family relations, it is irrelevant to the child's educational growth" (p. 110).

Social Integration and Literacy Development

As illustrated in Chapters Four and Five, a common phenomenon in the four families' literacy and living is their closed social world in their ethnic community and their distance from the local Canadian community. Although the two academic families engage in a variety of literacy activities, their activities are characterized by their ethnic solidarity within Canadian society. For the four

families, though living in the surroundings of the Canadian society, the bridge into the mainstream society is missing. There is little evidence that the Liu family and the Ye family had any social contact with mainstream Canadians except for the limited contact with non-Chinese customers in their restaurants. The two academic families observe Canadian society from a distance. Except for their limited association with a lady from the Jehovah's Witnesses faith, they have no Canadian student friends or faculty with whom they socialize. Coleman's (1990) social capital theory suggests that the way to understand this unique phenomenon is to examine the families' learning and socialization process in the society. In this section, I try to interpret the families' social world through the relationships between the families and their communities.

Wong (1998) postulates that to better understand the socialization process of family, it is important to include social relations that are embedded in the larger community and through which parents can mobilize the organizational resources to facilitate their children's learning. According to Wong, these relationships should include parents' social networks and interactions and involvement with teachers, students, and other parents. He stresses the importance of mobilizing support and resources from a network of institutional agents, including teachers, counselors, social workers, community leaders, and other related institutional leaders. Wong (1998) writes:

It is through the social relationships established with these institutional agents that individuals, including parents, establish social capital and

supportive ties to establish favorable conditions for engaging and advancing in the educational system. (p. 4)

The relationships are generated through different forms of between-family social capital. Hao & Bonstead-Bruns (1998) conclude that between-family capital captures at least four basic aspects: ethnic differences in cultural values, ethnic solidarity in the host society, contexts of reception by the host society, and modes of incorporation into the host society. In this next section, I discuss the relationship between the families and their communities.

The Families and their Communities

To the two entrepreneurial Chinese families in my study, the concept of ethnic community is distant. Unlike larger Canadian cities such as Toronto and Vancouver, where the Chinese community is the single largest ethnic group, Saskatoon is a small city with a relatively small Chinese population. The Chinese population in Greater Vancouver reached 102,950 in 1991, 21.8 per cent of the total population of Vancouver. And in 1998, the Chinese population in Vancouver grew to 900,000, half of the population of its visible minority residents (Mitchell, 1998). The increase in Chinese population in these big cities also increases access to ethnic services such as socio-cultural, economic, and political activities (P. S. Li, 1998, pp. 113-114). In the past few years, the Chinese community has begun to be more involved in educational decisions. For example, the Richmond Traditional School Parents Group, representing the Chinese community in Richmond, has been demanding that

the school board establish "a traditional program in Richmond [to] value what all parents value -- communication between the home and school and consistency in day-to-day school and classroom practices" (Porter, 1999, p. 1).

However, in cities such as Saskatoon, the Chinese population is relatively small. According to the Statistics Canada 1996 Census, there are only 3,665 Chinese people in Saskatoon, about 1.7% of the total population (216,445) of Saskatoon. The Chinese community here is less organized and assumes a less collective role in preserving its ethnic culture and developing its ethnic economy or political power than do the Chinese communities in larger cities. The only Chinese community organization in Saskatoon is the Chinese Cultural Society of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Branch, which has only about 120 members. This organization, though small, plays an important role in promoting Chinese cultural heritage, but it does not bring all Chinese people together. In February, 1999, Saskatoon had its first big Chinese New Year celebration. It was the first event in its history where the local Chinese people were brought together by a non-Chinese organization -- the Riversdale Business Improvement District (Juárez, 1999).

In terms of language preservation, there are two Chinese heritage language schools in Saskatoon. The Chinese Language School of Saskatoon focuses on Mandarin (standard Chinese) and serves mainly the needs of the Chinese academic families at the University; the Chinese Heritage School offers Cantonese (a regional dialect in Hong Kong), and serves the local Chinese communities who are from Hong Kong and Taiwan. The two schools

exist separately because of the political disputes between Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. None of the children in my study attends either of the schools. The two academic families are reluctant to send their children to study Chinese because they worry that studying Chinese will interfere with their English learning. But the families express that they will send their children to learn Chinese once they think the children's English has achieved Native-English speakers' level. The two entrepreneurial families do not know that there are Chinese schools in Saskatoon. When I told Kathy about the schools, she did not think it was necessary for her children to learn Chinese reading and writing since the children are already struggling with English.

Besides the geographic factor, there are several practical factors that affect the families' relationship with their communities and their literacy learning experiences. These factors include settlement patterns, personal choices, and their social relationship patterns. First, the settlement patterns of the four families influence their relationships with their communities and, consequently, the learning situations of the four families. Wong (1989) indicates that the area new immigrants settle in can result in different learning situations. Immigrants who settle in an ethnic enclave may have fewer opportunities to speak and practise English, and less motivation to learn the target language. The Liu family has settled in the hub of the old Chinatown area and are highly dependent on the extended family. They rely on their relatives in Canada, and their children; for example, Derin Liu stays home with his siblings and cousins without knowing any other children. Therefore, there is a lack of

opportunity for them to use English for daily communication. Moreover, because the Chinese community is so small, there is not a strong ethnic economic community, even in the Chinatown area. The Liu and Ye families seem to be distant from their business community. All the newsletters come from the non-Chinese business organization of the area and are always in English, which they can not read.

The Ye family have even less connection with the local Chinese community since they settled outside the Chinatown area in a lower socio-economic area, where they have become a racial minority. However, for the same reason, they have contact with the English-speaking customers, even though their contact is limited to the restaurant. The two academic families settled in the middle-class neighborhood close to the University. Their settlement outside the ethnic area has brought them more abundant language acquisition contacts.

Second, the business, professional, and personal choices made by the parents especially in the two entrepreneurial families have an impact on their language learning. The Liu family chose to cater to Chinese customers. In their restaurant, they provide satellite TV channels, Chinese magazines, and Chinese videotapes to attract Chinese customers. Even the physical environment is a re-creation of a typical Chinese restaurant. The color of the furniture in the restaurant is the traditional Chinese red. They have the Chinese menu written on a board on the wall. The atmosphere in the Liu restaurant is such that there is no necessity or motivation for the Lius to learn English. They

can get by using their first language. By catering to mostly Chinese customers, they have fewer opportunities to have contact with mainstream, English-speaking Canadians. And they do not have much chance to speak English, and they do not need to. Therefore, for the Liu family, there is little motivation to learn English language.

In their restaurant, the Ye family has chosen to serve mainly simple Western foods, and as a result, they attract non-Chinese customers. The Ye family, particularly Amy, interacts with English speakers every day. They are forced to learn and use functional English; and the customers are supportive and willing to teach them. Amy seldom watches TV because the only black and white TV they have in the cafe is never turned on. She spends most her day with customers, playing games or chatting. It is through the constant interaction and negotiation with the customers that she has learned the oracy of English language. At age two and a half, she is already able to differentiate the two language systems, speaking Chinese with her parents and her extended family members, and English with the customers and others who are not her family members. Two significant factors contribute to the Ye's success in oral language learning: the motivation and participation both of the Yes and the English-speaking customers who enjoy teaching and helping them.

The Ye family has also made a first educational choice for Amy by carefully selecting the first school she will attend. While preserving their first language at home, the Ye parents, suffering from not being able to speak fluent English, have decided that it is most important to be able to speak the

languages of Canada. Therefore, they have decided to send Amy to a school where she can learn both English and French.

In the Zhang family, Wang-ling has chosen a sewing factory job over a waitress job so that she can spend more time supporting Yue's learning at home. Because of their work, both Wang-ling and Nie-dong gave up their English studies through the Spouses' Program at the University, and the opportunities to learn English with the Open Door Society. They have made the choice to study English on weekends with a Jehovah's Witness lady, and attended the Jehovah's Witness congress despite their religious differences, because of the convenience of time for them. Their choices have opened up more opportunities to speak and use English.

The two academic families have close ties to their Chinese academic community, the Chinese Students' and Scholars' Association (CSSA). The Association plays an active and significant role in bringing all Chinese students together. Both the Zhangs and Lis are members of the Association. Every year, the Association organizes social gatherings for its members on most Chinese holidays and provides other social and cultural services. Both families attend the gatherings and meet friends from the University. Both children socialize with Chinese children of other Chinese graduate students. For the two families, even grocery shopping and lunchtime can become a community event. Their close contact with the Chinese graduate students' community not only gives them a sense of belonging but also provides information and resources. It is apparent that the academic families have established more social capital

through their ethnic community at the University than have the two entrepreneurial families who do not actually belong to a solid ethnic community.

The four families' differences in their social relations with the Canadian society and their communities can be understood in the principles of Chinese social relationships, that is, the principle of *guan xi*. Chang and Holt (1991) define *guan xi* as "the manner in which Chinese strategically employ relations as social resources"; it prescribes "a special connection between people, a connection which brings along with it interactants' special rights and obligations, resulting from including the interactants' as ingroup members" (p. 156). The Yes have established outward social relationships with the customers. They employ their *guan xi* or relations to the customers as social resources to improve their adjustment and adaptation to a new culture. The Lius have had well-established *guan xi* within the extended family. However, they do not make an effort to establish *guan xi* with the new culture. Their choice in building an ingroup and excluding non-Chinese customers from their ingroup has resulted in social isolation. The Zhangs and the Lis have established *guanxi* with the Jehovah's Witness lady and sometimes her community for opportunities to learn and practise English, and understand Canadian culture.

Although three of the four families have made efforts to establish *guanxi* with the Canadian society, and their social relations with the Canadian society are better than those of the Liu family who walled out many possibilities, their

integration into the Canadian society is far from satisfactory. Their *guanxi* with mainstream Canadians is still limited. The Yes have the most interactions with English-speaking Canadians, but their interaction is with a group of people who are a minority within Canadian society. Their *guanxi* has stayed within the limit of customer-owner relationships and the space of the cafe. For the two academic families, their interaction with Canadians has relied on their *guanxi* with a Jehovah's Witness lady. In this sense, these families live mostly in their ethnic solidarity either in their own kinship network (such as the Liu family) or in their professional ethnic group of Chinese graduate students group (such as the two academic families). The families' ethnic solidarity may deepen the social isolation that the families experience. As Yue Zhang's father commented, the ethnic solidarity among Chinese circles has actually widened their distance from the mainstream Canadian society. Therefore, more *guanxi* and social capital need to be established to break their isolation from the multidimensional communities in Canadian society so that there are more opportunities for socio-cultural and linguistic interactions.

Media and Literacy

Social isolation of the families and their children has brought media – a window of culture and literacy, and a means of entertainment – to the center of their daily lives, or vice versa. The presence of media in the lives of the respondent participants is prominent. Media, including television, videos, and computers are more than just a means of entertainment. They are a "pedagogy

of pleasure and meaning" closely associated with cross-cultural literacy and living (Giroux & Simon, 1989, p. 1). Through the "lived engagement of media and meaning", the families and their children's "desires, dreams, identities, and social relations are shaped" (Kelly, 1997, pp. 70-71). In this sense, media engagement is a form of within-family social capital that shapes the families' literacy and living. In other words, media as a form of knowledge and literacy performs a significant social function in the families' cultural adjustment in Canadian society.

Media, Literacy, and Culture

The lived engagement of media and meaning has never been static. Rather it has been "a site of contradictory practices, the complexities of which pose possibility and promise as well as entrapment" (Kelly, 1997, p. 73). Indeed, media have assumed many layers of meanings in the process the families and their children use to construct their cultural identities through their engagement with media. Media serves as a mediator and a bridge between cultures. For the entrepreneurial families, especially that of Derin Liu, media has become a site of cultural contradiction and resistance; and for the two academic families, media has become a site of cultural aspirations, of possibilities and promises.

In Derin Liu's family, media are everywhere. In a home paucity of print, television and video media play an important role. As described in Chapter Five, in Derin Liu's house, there are five TVs and VCRs; in their family

restaurant, there are two huge TVs and VCRs. For them, television is not just part of the home environment; it is "the environment" (Leonard, 1977, as cited in Wilkins, 1982, p. 12). Television as the environment has psychological, cognitive as well as social significance that shapes Derin Liu's family's literary lives and social relations. Derin Liu owns only three comic books but almost every Disney video, and he spends most of his after-school time alone watching his videos in the living room where the biggest TV is. Derin watches predominantly all English videos. He never watches cartoons on their regular TV channels, because their TV channels malfunctioned many years ago and nobody has fixed them since no one wants to watch them anyway. Thus, Derin is immersed in the fantasy world created by Disney videos, the "reality in boxes" (Whitley, 1996).

Derin's Disney world is a lonely world because no one in his family shares it with him; nor does he share with anyone outside his family members because he has no friends from school. His sisters and cousins watch Cantonese videos made in Hong Kong in their upstairs living room. His parents and grandparents spend most of their time in their family restaurant, where they watch Chinese television brought in by satellite dishes. As indicated in Chapter Five, watching Chinese television news and daytime soap operas is their major entertainment. They live in a Chinese world: They speak Chinese, read Chinese newspapers and magazines, and watch Chinese television programs. For them, television media plays two roles in their lives: a medium to preserve their culture and language which is part of who they are and where

they belong; and a medium of resistance against and escapism from the English culture that they are unfamiliar with and alienated from.

Media, therefore, becomes a site of cultural contradiction for Derin Liu's family. Media have created two distinct worlds in the Liu family: Derin's Disney world and his parents' and siblings' Chinese world. The two worlds exist parallel in the family and create a communication barrier between Derin and his parents and siblings. As described in Chapter Five, Derin phones his mother in the restaurant to share his video stories with her, but his mother can not understand him. And he becomes angry and calls her "stupid". The communication breakdown between the mother and child is essentially cultural. Isolated in her own Chinese world, Derin's mother can not understand Derin's Disney world.

In the two academic families, media engagement is a shared learning activity. As described in Chapter Four, the children in the two families, Yue Zhang and Yang Li, go to the library with their parents and choose books and videos. They watch TV programs and most of their videos with their parents or at least with their mothers who spent most of their after-work time with them. For example, Yue Zhang's parents watch *Ally McBeal* with her all the time; and Yang Li's parents watch *Speed*, *Airforce One*, and *The Simpsons* with him.

For both families, watching TV and videos is a family social and/or learning activity. They have TV closed captioning on to help them understand the lines and difficult words. TV programs and videos are sometimes tools for teaching values and morality. Yue's mother, for example, uses Yue's videos

such as *Now and Forever* (starring Shirley Temple) to teach her how to judge between right and wrong.

TV programs are also windows on Canadian culture. Isolated in their Chinese world, the families rely heavily on TV to comprehend Canadian society. They interpret Western human relationships and cultural customs from television. Yue's mother, for example, depicts Western working relationships, love, and marriage from *Ally McBeal*. Parents in both families watch TV programs, especially news programs everyday to get the local and national happenings and weather forecasts. Both have difficulty understanding the language, but they believe that the more they watch, the better they will understand Canadian society.

Different from the entrepreneurial families, the two academic families also engage with another media technology, the computer. In Yue Zhang's family, the computer assumes many roles. The computer is a tool for Yue's father's computer science study, for their contact with China and preservation of Chinese language and culture, and for Yue's English and Chinese writing, game playing, and drawing. In Yang Li's family, though they do not yet own a computer, they use their workplace computers and the library computers to teach Yang.

It is apparent that in the two academic families, different modes of media are used. Their media engagement is a shared family literacy practice that is intended for learning English language and culture, and preserving Chinese language and culture. For them, media engagement is a social resource for

their cultural adaptation and ethnic identity formation in Canadian society. Thus, media become sites of cultural aspirations, in which the promises and possibilities of their upward social mobility are embedded.

Media, Literacy Learning, and the Television Children

Media can be an important vehicle for literacy learning. More and more literacy researchers and practitioners, for example, Dyson (1997) and Bromley (1996), have begun to realize that popular media such as video and television is an important part of children's literacy learning. Video watching at home is a crucial part of children's literacy practices. Media have at least three functions in children's intellectual development: linguistically, they provide a language environment with visual images; cognitively, media convey two types of knowledge, that is, information about dynamic processes of action and transformation, and information about space (Greenfield, 1984); socio-culturally, media narratives create a particular culture which becomes the children's agent of socialization (Dyson, 1997; Pompe, 1996).

However, media research shows that not all media engagement is beneficial for children's development. Media, especially television, have been reported as having negative effects on children's literacy and learning. Summarizing Marie Winn's 1977 book *The Plug-in Drug*, Wilkins (1982) agrees that television can also bring the following dangers to children's lives:

[T]elevision has led to a decline in reading and writing skills, a diminution of socializing experiences, fragmentation of the nuclear

family, a rise in drug use, an increase in overactive behavior, and the creation of a breed of remorseless children. (p. 24)

Whether TV and video media affect children's intellectual development negatively or positively lies in how children are engaged with media. Two factors are important in the process: the amount of time and control, and the amount of social interaction involved (Greenfield, 1984). Research shows that excessive TV viewing has a negative effect on students' academic achievement (Keith et al., 1986). Excessive TV watching can damage children's imaginative power, and hence their intellectual development (Greenfield, 1984; Wilkins, 1982). Time spent on TV and video viewing and parental control in the processes of media engagement between the children in the entrepreneurial families and in the academic families is fundamentally different. In Derin Liu's family, video watching is unsupervised and uncontrolled. Derin Liu can watch any video at any time. His highest record was twelve videos in one day. In the two academic families, the children's TV and video watching is controlled. Yue and Yang cannot watch any program they want, any time they want, although they have more freedom on weekends. During weekdays, they must study English, do math exercises, and practise piano. The difference in time and control of TV and video viewing may be another factor that contributes to Yue and Yang's positive progress in literacy learning and Derin's underdevelopment in literacy, and his passivity in his desire to learn.

The amount of social interaction involved in media engagement is another crucial factor for positive literacy development. Based on Bakhtin's

(1981) theory of dialogic language development, Dyson (1997) contends that learning to use language involves learning to deliberately manipulate the letters and words about human relationships in order to interact with others in particular social situations. Therefore, without active participation and mental effort, learning is impossible (Greenfield, 1984). In the two academic families, media engagement such as TV and video viewing or playing computer games is parent-controlled. The children have opportunities and encouragement to engage in other kinds of literacy learning, such as reading books, writing, doing math, or playing with other Chinese children. In these two families, media engagement is a shared activity during which parent and child have dialogues.

However, for Derin Liu, TV and videos are his loyal babysitters selected by his parents. He has been left with the television set and VCR since he was a baby. Growing up with a television set seems to have significant impact on his language development. Excessive viewing has left him little time for human interactions. Therefore, he has very little exposure to the Chinese language spoken by his family members. His video watching activity is a solitary experience. He has little chance to talk or discuss with others in his family. In other words, he does not have a dialogic community to use language to make meaning. The speech he is familiar with is unidirectional television speech, which has impeded his language development. Therefore, Derin lacks the two most important elements for achieving language proficiency – social interaction, and authentic and meaningful contexts (Teale, 1986; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Strickland & Morrow, 1989). Social interaction in meaningful,

authentic contexts is considered significant for children's language development:

Children learn to speak by talking to real people, not by listening to mechanically reproduced speech. Real people speaking communicate the meaning of words, whereas television only reproduces sounds...

(Television and Child Development, a pamphlet from the TV Action Group, School House, Brookthorpe, Gloucester, Massachusetts, as cited in Wilkins, 1982, p. 23)

Linguistically, the television language that Derin has been extensively exposed to is also problematic for language acquisition. Television and video language is characterized by a narrower vocabulary than that used in children's books, by incomplete sentences, and by more compressed and straightforward conversations than those in real life (Ungerleider & Krieger, 1985; Wilkins, 1982). Furthermore, Derin has been exposed to a medium that is not suitable for conveying the semantics of language as "an idea is essentially language -- words and sentences" (Wilkins, 1982, p. 41). This factor may be one of the major reasons why Derin speaks underdeveloped English and has difficulty expressing abstract ideas. For example, when I asked him about *The Jungle Book* we were watching, he could not express the idea that the tiger had run away and disappeared in the jungle, so he just acted out for me what happened in the video.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed three important themes using Coleman's theory of family capital – home environment and literacy development, social isolation and literacy development, and media and literacy. I analyzed the relationship between literacy learning and the families' physical and social capital both within the families, in their communities, and with other forms of social agencies such as media.

The analysis suggests that the families' financial capital, that is the income and wealth of a family, does not play a critical role in children's literacy practices at home. The quality of a positive literacy environment is influenced by the richness of and accessibility to print in the homes. The two low income families, the Zhangs and the Lis, provide more opportunities for their children to associate with print than do the Lius and the Yes, who do not have much print in their environment even though they are in a better financial situation. The quality of a positive literacy environment has been determined by the social relationships between parents and children (within-family social capital), particularly, the degree of parental involvement in the children's learning. Although all the parents have influenced their children's first language Chinese through oral communication, their involvement in their children's second language English learning has varied. The Zhang and the Li parents have not only motivated their children, but have also been directly involved in their learning by supervising their studies at home or participating in a variety of family literacy activities.

The families' social relations within their communities also differ.

Because of the geographic part of the city in which they live, the influence of the Chinese community on the participants' lives has been minimal. However, the two academic families are closer to the Chinese academic community than the two entrepreneurial families are to their local Chinese business community. The Liu family has remained relatively isolated from the mainstream English society. The other families have had limited contact. The Ye family interacted with their English-speaking customers; the Li and Zhang families were contacted by Jehovah Witnesses community and attended their services. In the most part, all families socialized within their kinship or their ethnic community. As a result, their opportunities to learn and practise English literacy have not been sufficient.

Media as a form of social capital has been a site of contradictory practices for the four families. It has taken on different roles in different families. Media in the Liu family has been a babysitter for Derin who spends most of his time watching children's videos, while his parents work in their restaurant and his sisters watch Chinese videos upstairs in their home. His engagement with media is a solitary activity where there is no interaction or discussion with others. Excessive video watching with minimal social interaction may have impeded Derin's language acquisition both in his first language Chinese (Cantonese) and his second language English. In the two academic families, media engagement is a shared family activity and learning oriented. Parental

monitoring of media use has made it a valuable resource for the children to acquire language and to learn about Canadian culture.

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the preceding chapters, I have provided a detailed account of the home literacy practices of four Chinese immigrant families in their socio-cultural contexts in Canada. I have fulfilled the goal of doing ethnography and have described and uncovered the cultural lives of the four different families in their home milieu. In this chapter, I will draw conclusions to this study, consider what my experiences with the four Chinese families imply for ESL and mainstream teachers and educators, immigrant parents, and policy makers, and provide recommendations for further research.

Conclusions:

The Nature of Home Literacy Practices of the Chinese Immigrant Families

Through consideration of four focal children, this study has addressed the home literacy practices of Chinese immigrant families. I have embedded my understanding of the literacy and living of the four children in the socio-cultural milieu of their families, the place where the family members were interrelated to a wide range of experiences that have shaped their lives in Canada (Bhola, 1996). My study contributes to the repository of knowledge generated by many ethnographers such as Fishman (1988), Heath (1983), D.

Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), Neilsen (1989), and Valdés (1996), that literacy is everywhere in people's daily lives. Similar to the families in the above studies, literacy in the home settings of these four Chinese families also serves a variety of functions, such as providing information about practical problems, social relationships, news events, supporting daily needs such as verbal interactions and written notes and messages, creativity such as story writing and drawing, and occupational writing such as making menus (Mikulecky, 1990). Like these ethnographers of literacy, I have come to an understanding that each family's cross-cultural literacy and living is distinct because of the different socio-cultural experiences they have.

The children and their families have been a new world of exploration for me; each one is different. I have gone beyond the above studies to uncover the cultural beliefs that underpin the divergent ways literacy is practised in the home, and the relationship between literacy use in the families and school experiences the children bring home. In considering the Chinese immigrant families, I have come to realize that the nature of home literacy practices in the four families is determined by the literacy traditions and cultural values of the parents. The four families' home literacy practices reflect their literacy experiences in China, experiences they have brought with them to Canada. Shaped by different social and cultural norms that these families came from, the meanings of literacy and the methods of transmission differ from mainstream Canadian schools the children attend, and vary within the four families (Langer, 1987; Wagner, 1993).

Coming from Confucian China, the families' home literacy practices reflect the traditional value that literacy is the pathway to upward social mobility, and to individual's well-being in society. Therefore, the parents all have expectations and aspirations that education is important to their children's future and their success in society. Living in a country that is different from their homeland, their educational aspirations for their children are strengthened by their immigrant status. Confucian ideology also influences the ways literacy is transmitted and acquired in the families. The families take on the Confucian emphasis of the authority of texts such as the classics, and a structured approach to teaching. Literacy in the academic families is taught through rote learning and copying texts. Individual effort and discipline exercised through homework are also evident in the families. These values and beliefs differ from the transactional, learner-centered approach to literacy that the children experience in Canadian schools, and thus, contribute to the mismatch between home and school literacy experiences.

Despite the common influence from their shared Confucian tradition, the families demonstrate distinct home literacy practices because of their respective socio-cultural experiences in China and Canada. Factors such as the families' educational biography, their occupational choices and chances, the socio-geographic locations they reside in, their adaptation and integration into Canadian society, and their situational circumstances have also influenced how literacy is practised at home. These factors intertwine and interweave in the families' daily literacy and living, and thus, construct uniquely different, but

similarly complex experiences in the four families. The answer to the question of home literacy practices is indeed complex. It involves the parents' literacy experiences and heritage. It involves the parents and the children's experiences in Canada. It involves the social context where the family lives. And, it is an intricate, multifaceted playing out of all these experiences.

In responding to the question of the nature of home literacy experiences, I have uncovered the multi-faceted, complex reality of the way literacy is played out in four families. When I set forth this study in Chapter One, I provided four guiding questions, which I have listed below. The following discussion, then, focuses the answers to these questions.

1. What does the home literacy of the four focal children look like in the four Chinese immigrant families? In what contexts do the children use English and/or Chinese? What are their functional uses of each language?
2. What are the parental beliefs about literacy? How do parents' beliefs influence their perceptions of their children's school literacy and education?
3. How do families deal with cultural conflicts between home, school, and community literacy practices?
4. How does the children and their families' social integration into the Canadian society influence their literacy practices? And what is the role of media within literacy practices?

Question 1

The home literacy environment, which I considered in this study, included both physical and social environments. The physical environment included the visible layout of the homes where the four children lived. I looked at the availability and accessibility of print in their homes because print is the important medium through which children construct knowledge about literacy. The social environment included the social interactions among the children and their family members, what they do at home with each other in relation to literacy.

My study confirmed the findings of Heath (1983) and D. Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) that different families manage literacy in different ways. Although they came from the same home country, the four children and their families have very different home literacy practices. Yue Zhang and Yang Li live in crowded apartments in a middle-class, Caucasian neighbourhood, and their homes are small, but full of print materials, such as books, toys, and newspapers, pens, and papers. Yue Zhang and Yang Li are involved in a variety of literacy activities – reading, writing, speaking, drawing, music, and using computers. Their parents also take them on different kinds of family activities such as shopping, library visits, and church. Besides these social activities, Yue Zhang and Yang Li also spend time in the evenings studying with their parents, especially their mothers, who assign them homework, teach them math and Chinese, and help them improve their English. Their parents constantly express their frustration and confusion about what and how the

school works and how they can cooperate with the school curriculum to improve their academic performance.

Eight-year-old Derin Liu lives in a big house his family shares with their other two extended families in a disadvantaged neighborhood in Saskatoon. There are few books, but many videos, and five television sets and VCRs in their house. Derin Liu spends most of his time watching children's videos in English while his sisters and cousins watch Chinese videos. He seldom spends time with his parents who devote all of their time to their family restaurant, where they maintain a traditional Chinese world with Chinese television programs and magazines, Chinese menu, and Chinese customers. Because Derin Liu's family lives in an economically disadvantaged part of the city, and his parents are busy running their restaurant and making a living, he has been left alone from an early age with television and has had few opportunities to visit libraries, bookstores or shops. He is not fluent in either Chinese or English, and is considered a special-needs child in school. His mother, who hopes that he will improve, has shed many tears over his and his sisters' school performance.

Two and a half year old Amy Ye spends all her time in her parents' restaurant/home also in a disadvantaged neighborhood. Their restaurant has become a community centre for customers who are a minority in Canadian society, and who frequently do not have a supportive English literacy environment in their homes. Except for their menu and daily newspaper, there is little print material in their restaurant, and almost no children's literature.

However, this environment provides a rich oral speech context for Amy, who spends most of her day time chatting and playing with the customers, who enjoy teaching her English language, numbers, and letters. Amy is becoming bilingual in this environment, and is beginning to develop a meta-linguistic awareness of print. Her parents have decided to send her to a French Immersion program so that she can learn both official languages of Canada. Because her parents are busy with their restaurant business, Amy has had few opportunities to play outside their restaurant with other children or to experience other kinds of literacy activities with her parents.

Questions 2 and 3

During the process of uncovering the home literacy practices of the four children, I observed that the parents, similar to those described in the existing literature on immigrant families, have put great hope in their children's academic achievement but supported their children in distinctly different ways. For example, Yue Zhang's and Yang Li's parents, who are highly educated in Chinese, are directly involved in their children's learning, and have a Chinese-style curriculum at home for their children. Derin Liu's and Amy Ye's parents are working hard trying to establish a better life for their children, and hope that Canadian schools will help their children become literate in English so that they will have a better future. However, all four families have experienced difficulty, confusion, and frustration in their encounters with Canadian schools. After I had a clear picture of what the home literacy experiences of the four

children were like, I began to pursue in depth an understanding of the parents' beliefs about literacy, their perceptions of their children's school literacy and education, and how they dealt with cultural differences that occur between home and school.

This analysis of parental perception of literacy and children's education is complicated by several factors such as cultural values, parental educational background, current occupation, and job circumstances. Because literacy is a cultural practice, parents from different cultures have different beliefs about what it means to be literate, how to acquire literacy, and the role of schooling in achieving literacy. Parental educational attainment is also an important factor. Parents who are more highly educated tend to be more familiar with how the educational system works in the culture in which they were educated, and it is easier for them to follow the educational patterns. Further, if parents are associated with an educational institution, it is easier for their children to understand and adapt to the "culture of literacy" endorsed by the institution (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

All the parents came to Canada with their own cultural beliefs about literacy, influenced by Confucian ideology that emphasizes the authority of text, classics, and schools, and the importance of effort, formality, and discipline. Coming from this Confucian society, the parents have faced cultural conflicts when their children have had unfavorable experiences in school. Further, there exist sub-cultural differences among the families, further complicated by their prior social class in their home country. Yue Zhang's and Yang Li's parents

represented a middle-class, urban Chinese perspective on literacy and education, while Derin Liu's and Amy Ye's parents' perspectives were similar to that of the rural or urban disadvantaged class. Derin Liu's parents beliefs about education and literacy were also influenced by their educational experience during the Cultural Revolution in China. Cultural and sub-cultural differences have influenced their conception of Western schooling and their involvement with their children's schooling.

Yue Zhang's and Yang Li's parents were well-educated in China and their fathers are pursuing graduate studies at the University of Saskatchewan. Coming from a more traditional Chinese school model, which emphasized rote-learning, homework, standardized material, and a transmissional approach to learning, and a society that is very competitive, the parents question the coherence, planning, and depth of the curriculum, textbooks, homework, and examinations by comparing them to their experience of Chinese schooling. In order for their children to learn more and to have better success, they have created a Chinese curriculum at home; they assign homework for their children to copy textbooks, do dictations, and math exercises, and learn Chinese characters. Their teaching style is not congruent with the school approach in Canada, which emphasizes a transactional curriculum, with more emphasis on socio-constructivistic ways of learning, for example, learning through play, little or no homework for younger children, and a less standardized curriculum.

Derin Liu's and Amy Ye's parents did not have much schooling in either China or Canada. However, they have aspirations for their children's education and future in Canada. They came to Canada for economic betterment and a better future for their children, and they have devoted most their time to make a living in a new country. Their limited schooling has limited their ability to be involved in their children's education. Without sufficient knowledge about what books would be good for children, Derin Liu's mother bought world classics that she thought would be beneficial to their learning based on their Confucian philosophy that reading classics is the way to literacy. Derin's parents cannot read or write in English and their job circumstances do not allow them to spend time with their children. The parents have turned to Canadian schools as the place for the knowledge and discipline that they cannot give their children. When the school failed to achieve what they hoped for their children, they began to question the role of schooling. Amy Ye's parents have had only one encounter with Canadian schools, an experience that was frustrating. Their journey with Canadian schools has just begun.

Although all the families have had confusions and misunderstandings, none of the parents took an active role in seeking communication with the schools. Coming from another country where school and teachers' authority was highly respected, and being unfamiliar with the new cultural environment, the families have chosen to be silent, and they do not think they are in a position to initiate the communication or challenge established school practices.

Question 4

Many themes emerged in this study on the literacy and living of the four Chinese immigrant children in a cross-cultural context. The school-home connection is just one of the many aspects of their cross-cultural living. On examining the literacy and living of the four focal children closely, I found two issues to be prominent in the children's literacy lives. One is their family's social integration into the Canadian society; the other is media as a cultural product that plays an important role in their lives.

The extent to which the four families have integrated into the mainstream Canadian society is similar. No matter how long they have been in Canada, none has had much contact with mainstream Canadian society. Although Yue Zhang's and Yang Li's fathers are studying in a Canadian university, they do not have any social contact with mainstream Canadians except for some academic purposes. Their mothers' social contact with Canadian society has been with a Jehovah's Witness lady, not mainstream Canadian society. The families have socialized predominantly within their ethnic groups in the University. Derin Liu's parents, who have been in Canada for over twenty years, live in an almost intact Chinese world. Their only non-Chinese friend is a Portuguese woman who can speak Cantonese. Amy Ye's parents have good relationships with their customers who themselves are a minority, and their connection is limited to a customer, restaurant-owner relationship. The families' minimal integration into mainstream Canadian society has limited the opportunities to use and learn English language and its culture.

The families' limited social integration may have made media, particularly television and videos, an important window of Western culture. Media are apparently an important part of the children's literacy and living in a cross-cultural context. Yue Zhang, Yang Li, and Derin Liu are all actively engaged with media. However, media are handled differently and serve different functions in different families. Yue and Yang engage in a variety of media, such as videos in both English and Chinese, computers, and English TV programs, and use the media for entertainment, academic, and socio-cultural resources. Yue's mother uses some of the videos as tools for moral education, and the Internet as the resources for teaching writing. For Yue and Yang, media engagement is also a family activity shared with their parents, particularly their mothers. For Yue and Yang, media is a site of educational and cultural experiences.

Media has a different function for Derin Liu, who grew up with a television set. As a child-minder, media engages Derin in only one genre, children's videos in English; and his engagement is solitary. He does not have an adult or a peer to interact with while watching those videos, and he spends so much time passively in front of a television set that he has limited exposure to real life settings where authentic interactions occur. Derin's prolonged engagement with video programs, characterized by one-way communication, compressed conversations with narrow vocabulary, and incomplete sentences, may have contributed to his limited development in both his mother tongue Chinese and

his second language English. To Derin, the video programs are his faithful babysitters.

I have used Bourdieu (1977) and Coleman's (1988, 1990, 1991) theory of family capital as the framework to make meaning of the home literacy practices of the four children and their families. I have interpreted the families' literacy practices and their differences from four respects: cultural capital (social resources activated by the families for social advantages and educational success), physical capital (the material resources that can be measured by family wealth and income), their human capital (the individuals' educational attainment), and their social capital (the social relationships that exist in the family and the community). The families' experiences demonstrate that the physical capital, the economic situation of the families is not an important factor that influences the children's literacy development. Rather, their human and social capital, the parents' educational background and their social relationships within the family are the significant factors that shape the home literacy practices. These two factors, in turn, influence the cultural capital, the families' activation and investment of social resources in their children's education, and the quality of home literacy environment.

In concluding this study, the main contribution of my research is that it opens gateways to the understanding of immigrant children and their families' literacy and living in Canada. I have presented a close-up picture of the experiences of four ordinary Chinese families in Canada through an ethnographic lens. In order to understand the divergent ways literacy is

practised in the four families, I have followed Snow et al.'s (1991) profile of "family as educator". I have examined the literacy opportunities that the parents provide for their children, and their own literacy behaviors and preferences, the ways they teach and instruct their children, their aspirations for their children, their own educational background and literacy beliefs, and their perceptions of literacy and schooling in Canada. The account of their experiences has demonstrated the many-faceted nature of the home literacy practices in the four Chinese families, as well as the "multi-faceted differences" in the families' relationships to literacy in Canada (Lesman & Jong, 1998, p. 314).

The many-faceted issues the families have experienced in their day to day encounter with Canadian schools and culture should encourage educators and teachers, immigrant parents, and policy-makers to reflect on the current educational practices that matter to all children, especially the underprivileged children of immigrant minorities.

Implications of the Study

In this section, I present implications for teachers and educators, immigrant families, and policy-makers. This study suggests that there is a need for teachers and educators to know students' families – who they are and what they believe in – to better understand their students. Teachers and educators who are in a position of power should take a proactive stance to initiate change by bringing the knowledge from students' families and communities into classrooms. The study also suggests that immigrant parents

can help their children's learning in many different ways: by providing a print-rich learning environment and by spending more time with children rather than relying on television as a babysitter. Most crucially, for immigrant parents to better help their children, they should empower themselves by learning the language of Canadian social relations, and by becoming fluent themselves. For policy-makers, this study implies a need to make parental involvement a policy in education, and first-language and culture education part of the school curriculum at all levels. There is also a need to implement in the everyday practices of instruction in schools the current definition of who is considered to be eligible for ESL programs.

Implications for Teachers and Educators

My account of the four Chinese immigrant families provides an opportunity for Canadian teachers and other educators to acquire a holistic understanding of immigrant children in Canada. The four focal children, Yue, Yang, Derin, and Amy are growing up in their own particular family environments and have had different literacy experiences. Yue and Yang live in materially meager but print-rich homes where their parents are their active home-school teachers. They are new immigrants, but they are making rapid progress in their English reading and writing. Derin lives in an environment that is rich in material things, but has few print materials. He watches videos all day without any interaction with or supervision by his parents and siblings. Derin is not fluent in either English or Chinese. Three-year-old Amy spends most of her

time with restaurant customers learning how to speak non-standard English. The stories of these four children bring educators to the homes of the children and to the very essence of who they are and where they come from as socio-cultural beings. Their lived experiences support Valdés' (1996) contention that immigrant children and their families cannot be seen as a uniform racial category.

Moreover, the children and their families' ethnicity has interacted with their family circumstances such as the physical and social environments at home, parental educational and cultural backgrounds, and occupational choices. These interrelationships have shaped immigrant children as different learners. As presented in Chapters Six and Seven, the two academic families and two entrepreneurial families, though different in their family circumstances, have all experienced conflicts between Chinese and Canadian values in their encounters with Canadian schools. The two academic families have followed a basal-text approach that they valued from Chinese educational experience where the parents received higher education. They are not familiar with the whole language approach and other aspects of Canadian schools such as the curriculum or instructional approaches. To compromise, these parents homeschooled their children based on what they knew about education in China. The two entrepreneurial families, especially the Lius, who came to Canada twenty years ago, observe Canadian schools from their traditional Confucian outlook. Derin's mother spent a large sum of money buying a complete set of world classics and Encyclopedia Britannica with the

expectation that Derin and his sisters would grow up to be traditional scholars who could read the classics. The parents regard schools as a place for knowledge and discipline and their own role as moral supporters. These values are fundamentally different from the Euro-centric middle-class Canadian values that emphasize a shared responsibility between parents and teachers and active participation in their children's schooling (Lareau, 1989).

No matter how many years the families have been in Canada, they have not had much involvement with schools. This distance from schooling is in sharp contrast to Caucasian middle-class parents who are actively involved in many aspects of their children's schooling as described by Lareau (1989). And from the teachers' and schools' response regarding the focal children as told by the parents, the schools and teachers did not have a profound understanding of the families, nor did the teachers and schools make any efforts to understand the children and their families. Yue's teachers did not notice that her problem of not being able to comprehend the teacher's instructions was not a matter of misconduct, but of language difficulty. Yang's teacher did not understand that his parents did not speak English and could not practise speaking with him at home. His parents were concerned about the obvious loss of Yang's first language. Derin's teacher simply classified him as a special-needs student and sent him home every time he was in trouble. The lack of communication between schools and the families has made conflict between the teachers and parents of minority parents inevitable. J. H. Johnston (1990) writes:

Stereotypic views of disadvantaged families are deeply embedded in school wisdom. With virtually no firsthand contact with minority families, without any mechanism for securing their point of view, schools have developed very strong perceptions of the family that serve to justify its exclusion from schooling process (p. 22).

The children and families' experiences highlight the need for teachers and educators to take a different outlook on immigrant children in Canadian schools, and connect classroom instruction with students' cultural identity. This study supports many multicultural educators' advocacy that teachers and educators need to be culturally sensitive to students and their families (Davidman & Davidman, 1997). Teachers and educators should "know, accept, and celebrate the cultures from which their children are from" (Purcell-Gates, 1996, p. 193). They also need to become adept at collecting, interpreting, and making instructional decisions based on socio-cultural data of students of diverse backgrounds. The data include those related to cultural beliefs, ethnicity, and gender. Teachers and educators need to use the data selectively to "empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 17-18). In other words, teachers need to use student culture as an important strength upon which to help students construct their school literacy experiences.

To build a cultural continuity between students' home and school learning experiences requires teachers not only to know who students are and

how they live, but also bring their cultures to the classroom, that is, to involve students' families and their cultural communities in students' learning in school. McCaleb (1994) contends that the parents' clearest connection to the school and the children's education is the classroom and the classroom teacher. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to "welcome and validate parents by listening to their concerns and finding positive things to communicate to them about their children's on-going progress" in order for the parents to open up for a possible partnership (p. 191).

Parental involvement in schooling is beneficial for minority students' psychological wellbeing and academic success. Although literacy research has emphasized the importance of parental involvement in schooling, my research findings demonstrate minimum communication with the parents and almost no parental involvement in the school context among the four Chinese families. Epstein (1989) theorizes five hierarchical levels of school-parent partnerships:

Type 1. The basic obligations of parents that are associated with basic responsibilities of childrearing.

Type 2. The basic obligations of school that include formal and informal communication with parents about school programs, students' progress and special needs.

Type 3: Parental involvement in school, which refers to parents' actual presence in school and other volunteering involvement in learning.

Type 4: Parental involvement in learning activities at home. This form of participation refers to parent participation in schoolwork the child carries home, either at the child's request or that of the school.

Type 5: Parental involvement in governance and advocacy, which involves parental leadership. (p. 25-26)

In this study, the participating families carried out their basic obligations as indicated in Type 1, and the schools fulfilled their own obligations as described in Type 2. However, the two institutions are functioning in their roles without any collaboration between them. They have never reached Type 3 and beyond where parents are actively involved in children's schooling in all aspects and all settings. It is therefore necessary for teachers and educators to create effective ways to involve parents in children's learning in the classroom and beyond.

To bring parents into the classroom setting and integrate their knowledge into classroom learning requires teachers and educators to neglect traditional family intervention programs such as Even Start Programs and Laubach's Family Literacy Programs that are detached from classroom learning (Moll, 1992). The traditional approach to get parents involved in children's schooling is family intervention programs, where a group of educators or parent experts (often middle-class Caucasians) get the minority parents (mostly mothers) together to teach them Western mainstream parenting skills with the aim to change behaviors and attitudes within families (Auerbach, 1995). These skills include how to interact with their children

verbally (e.g. learning to use complex or elaborated language with their children), how to implement parent teaching behaviors, and how to become better models and facilitators of their children's reading at home (e.g. reading to children, interactive practices while reading, providing reading materials and parental modeling, guidance and instruction) (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993, pp. 97-102). The family intervention programs, as Auerbach (1995) points out, are deeply rooted in a deficit perspective. The implied point of view of these programs is that "children's skill deficiencies are attributed to the inadequacies of parents' skills and beliefs about literacy" (p. 645). In other words, the parents are incompetent and are unable to educate their children, and mainstream parenting skills are the remedies for their inadequacies.

This dissertation suggests that the four pairs of parents, especially the mothers, though belonging to a low socio-economic group and not literate in English, did support their children's literacy learning in multiple ways. And their ways of supporting their children's literacy acquisition were deeply rooted in their cultural beliefs that are fundamentally different from mainstream Canadian values. For example, one mainstream Canadian value-- parent-child shared book reading -- is not part of Chinese literacy practices because in Chinese culture, book-reading is viewed as individual exploration. The Canadian focus on a whole language approach and extra-curricular activities is different from the four Chinese families' approach. And certainly, no Canadian school would expect a student to become a great scholar through reading world classics. These cultural values of the Chinese parents are an important

part of who they are. To impose Western mainstream parenting will eventually result in the denial of the families' cultural identity and strengths, and force conformity to mainstream Euro-centric values and expectations. Valdés (1996) illuminates the consequences she foresees, referring to similar attitudes towards Mexican-origin immigrants in southern United States:

the rhythm of the family would change entirely if the adults were to become involved in family intervention programs that resulted in changing the way they lived their lives. Indeed, if mothers were persuaded, for example, to "enrich" their children's language in the manner of American middle-class mothers; if they were to structure "talk" with their children by teaching them to display information or by expanding their children's utterances, these practices would change the internal verbal interactions of the family. When and how and for what reasons mothers talk to their children would be transformed. *Consejos* [verbal teaching activity] might well give way to recitations by the children, to telling stories, and to play games. (p. 202)

This dissertation extends many ethnographic studies of immigrant families such as Valdés (1996) that use a family intervention approach to fix the differences or "problems" is problematic. My study supports Schockley, Michalove & Allen's (1995) advocacy of "partnerships, not programs" (p. 91). The lived experiences of my participants suggest that partnerships between home and school can be built using a multiple-literacies approach. This approach seeks to investigate, celebrate, and validate students' and their

families' multiple literacies and cultural resources in order to inform students' learning (Auerbach, 1995; Moll, 1992). The central stance of this perspective is that "whatever their literacy proficiency, participants bring with them culture-specific literacy practices and ways of knowing" (Auerbach, 1995, p. 651). The multiple literacies perspective requires teachers and educators to take a stance of inquiry and be informed by students and their families' beliefs and practices; to incorporate culturally familiar and relevant content and provide culturally familiar contexts (e.g. ensuring the communities and the languages of the learners are represented in the staff, and/or through the use and instruction of the first language); to involve learners in the curriculum development process (e.g. learners selecting curriculum goals and themes); to take a stance that emphasizes cultural maintenance and negotiation rather than cultural assimilation (Auerbach, 1995, pp. 652-653).

If the teachers of the four focal children were to understand the children from a multiple literacy perspective, they would first know the students' lives at home and to listen to the parents' concerns. They could introduce the school programs to the parents through an orientation activity or by inviting them to the classroom to participate in classroom instruction using interpreters. The parents would then not feel so unfamiliar with Western schooling. Yue Zhang's teacher would understand how much effort her parents have put into her study after school. Derin Liu's teachers would probably have a different understanding of his language problem and may not label him as a special needs child, but provide him with extra language help by attending to his

literacy abilities in Chinese or in English. They would also invite the parents or community members to their classrooms to demonstrate the strengths of Chinese culture. Derin's classmates probably would not call him "China Boy" and Yang Li would not go home and think Chinese people are stupid because he could not speak English at school.

My study suggests that multiple stances are crucial for students' psychological wellbeing and academic progress. However, as the teachers are always in the power position and are perceived by parents to have the authority of knowledge, it is vital for teachers to initiate communication and change. Many immigrants, indeed the participants in this study, perceive Canadian society as one that belongs to the society of middle-class Caucasians (G. Li, 1998) although the government claims that Canada is a multicultural society. They consider themselves to be late-comers and do not assume authority and autonomy in the host country (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). Though the parents in my study have their own beliefs about education and sometimes regard what schools do to their children as wrong, none of them assumed any power to challenge school practices as the mainstream middle-class parents did in Lareau's (1989) study. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to take "a proactive stance" toward teaching (Purcell-Gate, 1996, p. 194). Proactive teachers take charge of the learning environment for each child and make initiatives to invite the parents and their communities to the classroom. Purcell-Gates (1995) writes:

Proactive teachers do not simply wring their hands when confronted with failure to learn. They do not simply shake their heads and refer unsuccessful children out to "specialists." They do not simply blame the children, themselves, for failure. Nor do they simply blame the children's parents or cultures. Acknowledging complexity, proactive teachers do something for each child; they take action based on their knowledge of culture, cognition, and schooling. (p. 194)

Implications for Immigrant Families

My study suggests that parents can influence children in multiple ways. Whether the parents are literate or not in the official language, they can support their children's learning in their culturally specific ways. The parents in this study differed in their educational backgrounds and occupations, but all parents provided support for their children's learning in different ways although their support may not have been directly related to their children's everyday academic study.

This dissertation is a study of home literacy, considered through the experiences of the four focal children and their families. A strong message in this study is the disparity found between school and home literacy practices, and the importance of home-school literacy continuity in students' academic success. The process of bridging home-school learning involves the efforts of both teachers and parents. In this section, I outline the implications of my account of the four families for minority immigrant parents.

Parents can enhance their children's learning by providing an inspiring learning environment. My study suggests that no matter what the socio-economic situation, parents can build on their socio-cultural capital by providing a print-rich learning environment and by actively interacting with their children. For example, the two academic families, the Zhangs and the Lis, who live in limited physical space, have homes that are full of books of all kinds, most of which are for their children's learning. The print-rich environment helps the children develop knowledge about print. However, the two entrepreneurial families, though they have more space and are financially more stable, do not have many books and are not familiar with print. In Derin Liu's family, his mother tried to provide a good print environment, but things didn't work out for her. She bought a set of world classics; they store them in boxes in their restaurant, never touched or seen by the children. To immerse children in books, to make books fill their space, and to make books part of their lives will provide "opportunities in the home for the development of correct and effective use of language" and of children's conceptions of literacy (Kelleghan et al. 1993, p. 136).

Active oral communication in the home milieu is another way to build a positive language learning environment. The parents in the two academic families spent a lot of time with their children, talking to them, doing family chores together, watching TV and videos, or studying. Although most of their oral communication is in their first language Chinese, their constant interactions stimulated the children's language acquisition. In the two

entrepreneurial families, Amy Ye spent time playing and chatting with customers. Her constant oral exchange with the customers and her parents has assisted her oracy in English although what she has learned is non-standard English. Amy's experiences with oracy are much preferred to Derin's isolation. Derin has been left alone with television and has not had the benefit of dialogue and language interaction in either Chinese or English. Lack of oral interaction with more capable adults or peers seems to have contributed to his insufficient language development. The existing literature on language acquisition has demonstrated that language proficiency is acquired through social construction (Street, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978). Researchers of emergent literacy such as Snow and Ninio (1986), Strickland & Morrow (1989), and Teale & Sulzby (1986, 1989) suggest that parent-child oral interaction and storybook reading are important to children's early language development. Therefore, it is important for parents to spend time with their children talking, playing and doing family activities together in order to stimulate their children's language and literacy experiences. Furthermore, they need to recognize the value of communication in their first language for their children's overall literacy growth.

My study also suggests that parental moral support alone is not adequate for encouraging learning. It implies that parental actual involvement in learning is crucial for children. According to Coleman (1990), family capital such as physical or financial capital is irrelevant to children's educational development if it is not used effectively as their children's educational resources. Therefore, the parents' moral support would not be beneficial for

their children's academic development if they did not turn their support into positive resources, and make it directly related to their children's learning. In the four families, the parents have academic aspirations and expectations for their children and are supporting their children's learning in their own ways. A significant difference between the two types of families lies in the degree of involvement with their children's learning activities at home. In the two academic families, the parents are involved in their children's learning at a detailed level. In Derin Liu's family (and Amy Ye's), the parents provide indirect support and are not present or involved in the children's learning activities. It is helpful for the parents to be involved in all aspects of schooling.

It is apparent from my study that parents can support children's learning by providing a variety of learning activities for children. Teale & Sulzby (1989) have emphasized that exposure to print in the home environment and community and use of language in real life settings are important pathways through which children acquire literacy. Involving children in all kinds of family activities can be an effective way to provide opportunities for children to be exposed to all forms of literacy such as street signs, print on packages, books, and technology. In the two academic families, the children regularly visited libraries and bookstores; the parents and children shared family activities, such as going to sports games and grocery shopping. These family activities socialized the children into the environment of all forms of literacies.

My study complements Dyson's (1997) work, which pointed out how popular media were an important part of children's lives inside and outside

classrooms. The four focal children were actively engaged in different kinds of media in their lives at home. To deny the significance of media to children's literacy development denies a very important part of who they are in a contemporary technology age. Media assume many roles such as entertainment, learning tools, and babysitters for the children. However, not every type of engagement is beneficial for learning. My study suggests that parents should not regard television or any other kind of media as a babysitter. In Chapter Seven, I have explained that media such as videos and television, if not handled appropriately, provide one-way communication and are not beneficial for children's literacy development because literacy is learned through interaction and parents' scaffolding. In addition, television plays a role in separating children from books. Therefore, parental guidance and supervision are necessary for children to make use of media as a means of learning. Parents need to make TV watching or playing computer games a shared activity, a way to spend time with their children rather than a release time from supervising them. And parents should not allow television to replace book reading in their children's lives.

In the implications for teachers and educators, I have suggested that teachers are in a power position and should take the initiative to invite parents to participate in children's school learning and treat parents as partners. Teacher associations such as the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and teacher education programs can develop programs to help in-service professional education. Social agencies such as Open Door Society can also

play a role to help develop partner's skills in the ethnic community.

However, the task of building school-parent partnerships requires effort from schools, families, and communities. Partnerships require parents to play an active role in their children's education at school. If teachers are not making initiatives to connect with students, the parents should assume agency and responsibility to contact the schools and make their concerns known to their children's teachers and schools. Therefore, parents can also be proactive agents to initiate school-home, two-way communication. In my study, none of the parents assumed any authority to initiate communication with the teachers even if they had serious questions and concerns regarding their children's learning at school. Lack of communication and understanding of different ways of schooling between the parents and schools resulted in confusion and frustration.

Finally, an important message to all immigrants that emerge from this study is the significance of learning the language and culture of the host country. Two major factors that contribute to the lack of communication between the families and schools, and their social isolation, are cultural beliefs, and lack of English language ability. Language and literacy skills can be learned to ensure successful adaptation and integration into the host society. Learning a new language and its culture means generating new knowledge and literacy skills in a new language, a language that often is the gateway to inclusion and access to social resources — jobs, education, and other opportunities. Moreover, learning the language and culture will increase flexibility and

autonomy in people's lives. In the two entrepreneurial families, especially the Lius, the parents could not read or write English and were restricted in what they could do in their daily lives, such as writing cheques, going to the hospital or ordering goods for their business. They could not participate in their children's study or communicate with the teachers without the help of their children or other bilingual people. Therefore, it is necessary for immigrants to learn the language of power and to be able to communicate through their own words rather than "other people's words" (Purcell-Gates, 1996). The more they learn, the better they can improve their life and the more they can help with their children's learning. Furthermore, to learn the language of power will not only benefit the parents themselves, but also influence their children's attitude towards learning. Parents as avid learners can encourage students' desire to learn and serve as models for their children. They can participate in transition programs, invest in their own integration into the host society, seek entry into and build their ethnic organizations.

What needs to be pointed out is that learning a new language and culture, and model language learning for their children, does not mean giving up one's own language and cultural heritage, as language and culture are part of one's cultural identity. Parents who are learning a second language should not uproot their own cultural beliefs and language, especially their children's first-language learning to fit into the dominant society. It is generally recognized that the level of development in first language influences the acquisition of a second language (Cummins, 1989). In my study, Yue Zhang, Yang Li, and Amy

Ye's first-language development may have contributed to their success in their English learning. Derin Liu's insufficient Chinese may have influenced his apparent lack of ability to learn English. Thus, it is important for parents to preserve their first language at home. My study has demonstrated that the maintenance of first language is not an easy job. The parents in the academic families have tried to teach their children, but progress is slow. Therefore, it is important for parents to use community resources such as local heritage language schools for their first language preservation.

Implications for Policy-Makers

The disparity between home and school literacy practices has profound implications for policy makers in education. In this study, neither the schools nor the families demonstrated an awareness of the significance of parent-family partnership. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a policy to make parental involvement part of the school curriculum. Under this policy, schools provide orientation and other means to help parents become familiar with the school context and their children's lives in school. Teachers need to place home visits at the top of the agenda to understand, from an intercultural perspective, who their students are, how they live, and what their concerns are. The policy must make clear parents' responsibilities and help them to take an active role in their children's learning. Through an inclusive policy that involves both parents and schools, the distance between literacy theory and practices could be shortened.

More importantly, this study has significant implications for language education policies. The findings of this study support the existing literature that first language and culture (ethnic literacy) may not hinder the adaptation of immigrant children to the host society. Rather, their first language and culture "connects students to a system of ethnic support that can provide encouragement and direction..." (Bankston III & Zhou, 1995, p. 15). For my participants, their first language and culture was of paramount significance in their immigrant lives. For the families, their first language was part of their roots. To keep their first language alive at home is their connection to their home culture and the assertion of their personal and cultural identity in a Canadian society. All four families made efforts to maintain their Chinese language at home. Yue's mother made it a rule that Yue always speak Chinese at home. Yue's parents have even used the Internet and Chinese textbooks to teach her Chinese reading and writing. When I asked Amy's mother Sue about her vision of Amy's Chinese ability, she said, "We are Chinese, so we need to know the language. I always talk to her in Chinese at home." All the families acknowledged that their Chinese language and culture was a comfort in their struggle to adapt to the new linguistic and cultural environment. Even seven-year-old Yang has recognized that English is something one needs to learn to survive in this society. He preferred to read or listen to Chinese stories before he went to bed, because it is his mother tongue and he felt relaxed listening to and reading Chinese. For Yang and the other children and their parents, their Chinese language and culture provided "emotional and normative supports"

that their second language, English, could not provide (Bankston III & Zhou, 1995, p. 14).

Although efforts have been made to maintain home language literacy, there exists signs of home language loss in the children of the four families. Derin Liu cannot speak, read or write his home language. His sisters can speak Chinese, but none of them can read or write Chinese. In the two academic families, both Yue and Yang can speak fluent Chinese. However, as their parents observed, their children's language ability is receding because of their limited use of the language and the overwhelming power of English in the children's lives outside home and in the schools (G. Li, 1998). To enhance students' conceptions of themselves and their heritage language and culture and to make use of their repository of knowledge, it is imperative to promote heritage language education in the school system. As Cummins (1989) and many others advocate, the teaching of heritage languages should be "a legitimate *educational* endeavor" that ought to be supported by educators and teachers (p. 16, *Italics original*). In Canada, only a few provinces, such as Ontario, have made an effort to integrate first language into school curriculum, mostly at the high-school level. Since the number of immigrant children of all levels is increasing in classrooms across Canada, it is necessary to promote the inclusion of the first language in school curriculum at all levels wherever there are minority children.

One final implication for policy makers that I wish to make is the implementation of current ESL policies. It is necessary to include in the ESL

programs both immigrant children, that is, children who come to Canada as dependents of the family, and children of immigrants, children who are born in Canada and whose parents come to Canada as immigrants, along with other visible minority children, such as Aboriginal children whose first language is not English. In this study, the children of the Liu family and probably the Ye family, who were children of immigrants, were not placed in ESL programs because they were born in Canada and were Canadian citizens. Therefore, what was done was different from what was said in the curriculum. This study suggests that because of the socio-cultural and socio-economic environments in which the children of immigrants live, some may not grow up with sufficient exposure to the official languages, and consequently may not be able to speak either language. Policymakers must recognize the existence of such children in the Canadian mosaic and acknowledge their language needs for ESL training not only at the policy level but also at the practice level.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study, with its particular focus on immigrants in a Canadian context, was influenced by, but went beyond, the ethnographic research on immigrants' and ethnic minorities' literacy and living such as that of D. Taylor (1983), Valdés (1996), Purcell-Gates (1996), and Fishman (1988), whose work focused on the American context. There is a need to conduct much research in a Canadian context: studies of Canadian immigrant children and their families' lived realities.

The study has focused on the home milieu, which I found to be distanced from the school milieu as well as from other social contexts such as communities. Further research on immigrant children in a school milieu needs to be conducted to examine the lived realities of immigrant children's school lives. Aspects that need to be investigated include: how immigrant children connect their home literacy practices with school literacy in classroom settings; how teachers facilitate students' home-school connections in class; and the pedagogical and policy implications of home-school connections. Studies in these areas would provide a holistic perspective on the processes of immigrant children's literacy and cultural transitions and adjustment in and out of schools in Canadian society.

In the implications for teachers and educators, I suggested that teachers and educators invite parents to classrooms to be part of their children's school learning. I do not agree with the idea of setting family intervention programs to teach the parents white, middle-class, parenting skills. Instead, I support the multi-literacies approach that treats parents as equal partners. The process of building partnerships involves many factors including time, budgets, administration, and many parties including teachers, students, curriculum developers, and policy makers. Studies must be carried out to investigate effective ways to engage families in children's school learning.

As outlined in the implications for policymakers, more policies need to be established to build school-home continuity, and to include first language in the school curriculum. Since Canada is a culturally diverse country, more

research should be conducted to explore ways to include all cultures in the policies and school curriculum to serve the interests of all students from different cultures.

This dissertation has addressed several critical issues including ethnicity, class, and power. However, it has not touched an important issue -- the issue of gender. Gender should be further explored in two aspects. First, gender construction of young children in a cross-cultural context upon their immigration to Canada. Because immigration changes the role of women and men in the families, for example, in the four Chinese families, especially in the two academic families, women became the main bread earners of the family. Their status has changed in the immigration process. Thus, there is a need to understand how young boys and men, girls and women adapt to Canadian culture, and how they redefine their masculine or feminine roles within the cross-cultural context upon their immigration to Canada. Second, few studies (Espín, 1999) have addressed the impact of immigration on immigrants' gender roles, especially those of immigrant women. My study suggests that wives are both primary caregivers of the children and primary bread-earners. What are the implications of their new roles in a host society for immigrant women? And what is the impact of status change in a host society on the lives of the men who are immersed in work in the restaurants or in their studies in the university labs? To explore the transformation of gender roles in immigrants' lives is another interesting area for further exploration.

A Final Remark

Through this dissertation, I have demystified the home literacy milieu of Chinese immigrant families in Canada. My own position as a Chinese immigrant pursuing a Ph.D. degree in a Canadian university has given me the opportunity to take my readers into the homes of Chinese immigrant families, and their literacy and living. In so doing, this study has contributed to the understanding of literacy outside school in the homes and communities of immigrant families in Canada.

EPILOGUE

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Through this study, the four families and I have shared another journey in the distance we have traveled and are traveling. Both the families and I constantly negotiated meaning at the interface between two languages and cultures inside and outside our homes. Reflecting on the many happy times we have shared with each other, I realize that the key to the success of my dissertation research is our shared Chinese language and culture. That common bond enabled the families to accept me and welcome me into their homes from the beginning of my data collection, and share with me their happiness and concerns, their pride and joy, their ups and downs. The relationship between us is not just that of the researcher and the researched, but rather that of friends and families.

Upon finishing the writing of this dissertation, a new school year has begun. Yue Zhang is in grade three this year and attends a new school that she has not figured out whether or not she likes. But one thing she is sure that she will like is that she has been admitted to the Saskatoon choir for her age group. She is one of the few minority children who were accepted. Her mother Wang-ling quit her sewing factory job and decided to study English through an ESL program offered by the Saskatchewan Immigrant Women's Association. Her father Zhang-bo is still studying in his computer science undergraduate

program. Yang Li's parents moved out of their crowded apartment to a more spacious one and transferred Yang to a school close to their new apartment. Yang is more comfortable with school now as his English is much better. He is also doing well with his music lessons and is proud to be the favorite student of his piano teacher. Derin Liu has stayed in the same school, and was placed in grade two. His mother Kathy is more concerned and desperate because her daughters attend high school this year, and without them being in the same school as Derin, it is more difficult for her to get in touch with school and get to know what is going on with him. Amy Ye started preschool which she enjoys very much. The school is far away from their restaurant, but it offers a French immersion program in kindergarten. Her parents are thinking of expanding their business in a small town in Saskatchewan. Indeed, life goes on, and the families' journey in Canada, as well as mine, continues.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
THE PILOT STUDY

The Pilot Study

In this section, I outline the procedures for conducting the pilot study including participant selection, gaining entry, data collection, data analysis and other personal dimensions I identified during the pilot study.

Participant Selection

Glesne & Peshkin (1992) recommend piloting the observations and interviews in situations and with people as close to the realities of the actual study as possible, and drawing the pilot study participants from the target population. Because my dissertation research is to investigate Chinese immigrant families, my original plan was to conduct a pilot study with four Chinese couples without children. I had located four couples who were willing to participate in the study.

However, because of academic and practical concerns, I changed my participants to one Filipino family. Academically, my study on literacy and culture focused on the family as a whole with children being a central part, as children are most important to my research if I want to compare home and school as learning environments. Although the four couples fit the category of "Chinese" immigrants, they did not have children. My practical concerns were transportation and time frame. Doing research in the winter and having to travel by bus to get to the sites became very difficult for me and for the families whose time schedules were different from mine.

I met the Filipino family when I first moved to the neighborhood in which I now live. The family's culture and language complexity at home was fascinating: they have three generations (grandparent, parents, three children) living in the same house, they speak two languages (Tagalog and English) at home, and four of the children are in French immersion programs. Immediately, I thought this was an ideal family to try my pilot study.

Gaining Entry

Gaining entry to a site is a process of obtaining consent or permission to go where you want, observe what you want, obtain and read whatever documents you require or do things you think are necessary to meet the research purposes (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The process of gaining access varies depending on the research topic and the requirements of the case (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). In my case, the pilot study was conducted as a project for a research class called "Ethnographic Studies in Literacy and Language". Permission to do the research at the university level was through the class and I sought verbal permission from the family to conduct the research in their family. Upon entering the site to do observation, I asked the family to sign a written consent for the study. They were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. The entire family agreed to participate in my study.

Data Collection

The tasks of ethnography are to discover cultural patterns through studying human behaviors in the natural settings in which culture is manifested (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). In order to have a holistic, comprehensive and accurate account of the literacy and cultural lives of the Filipino family, I used a variety of ethnographic techniques. These techniques included observations, interviews, collecting artifacts and documents, field notes and journal writing.

Observations

My data collection began with non-participant observation. I went to the family as a visitor to obtain general knowledge of the setting and the participants. I assumed a peripheral-member-researcher role. After several visits, I established rapport and trust with the family and I became more involved with them. My role as researcher gradually became one of active-member-researcher. I participated in some of the family activities such as watching TV, reading books, playing games, and sharing meals. To get a holistic view of their lives, I periodically changed the time and the contexts of my observation: sometimes I went observing in the evening, sometimes during the day when the children came home from school.

I went through the three stages of observation (descriptive, focused, and selective) described by Spradley (1979). I began with descriptive observation. Through grand-tour and mini-tour observation, I recorded detailed information of the settings and activities that happened during my visits. These observations

allowed me to get familiar with the setting and the informants in a broader sense. After I had general knowledge of the setting, I began to focus my observation on some particular aspects that I considered important. These aspects were: 1) What kind of literacy activities do the family do at home? 2) How are the Philippine culture and Canadian culture practised at home? 3) How do the family members interact with each other at home? 4) How have their experiences in school or work influenced their lives at home? After six weeks' observation, three themes became evident: literacy and culture preservation/resistance, literacy and identity formation. These four themes became my selective ethnographic focus.

Interviewing

Interviewing and observation are complementary in ethnography. My choice of interview methods depended on my judgement of my relationship with the participants. I did my first interview with the second child of the family at my home when she came to interview me for one of her school projects. I did a conversational interview without tape-recording and jotted down our conversation. Since this occurred shortly after I started the study, the interview was mostly informational. I did the remainder of the interviews toward the end of the study after I had already had enough information about the family and had established better rapport with them.

During my observation, I met and talked with the mother, and the communication between us was close and friendly. I decided that a tape-recorded conversational interview with her would be effective. I outlined some

basic questions and went to her home with a tape-recorder. For the convenience of tape recording, we had a chat over the dinner table. As it was conversational, the interview was lengthy and strayed from our topic. Therefore, I assessed that it was not as effective as I had expected.

I went to Wolcott (1995) for help. Wolcott (1995) suggests that conversational approaches in tape-recorded interviewing are less effective and may be unnecessary if participants know how I distinguish between ordinary conversation and a formal interview in which I will record the interviewee's exact words (p. 114). Also, as each informant assumed different roles in the family, it was impossible for me to use structured interviewing to ask everyone exactly the same set of prescribed questions. Since some of the questions were specific to each person and sensitive, group interviewing was not appropriate for my informants to discuss the questions in depth and express their dissenting opinions. I decided to try unstructured, open-ended interviewing with the rest of the family. It proved that this approach allowed me as a researcher to have some control over the topic, and at the same time, allowed informants to interpret the questions and give their point of view freely.

Field Notes

I kept different types of notes – descriptive and analytical notes as suggested by Spradley (1980). Descriptive notes recorded the physical features of the setting and the activities the members engaged in during my visits. However, as I became participant observer, it was hard for me to keep notes on

the site, since I had to do whatever they did and still talk with my participants. Writing field notes gradually became off-site work for me. My analytical notes included some of the questions I noted during my observation or things I need to investigate further.

Journals

I agree with Agar (1980) that a diary is a more realistic way to record information. To write on the observations I did, and reflect on the methods I used was helpful for me 1) to critique my techniques and improve them; 2) to identify the themes that emerged in my observation and interviewing; 3) to identify my own subjectivity; and 4) to narrow the focus of my observation.

Documents and Artifacts

To better perceive the tacit culture and literacy beliefs of the family, I collected their writings, drawings, and school report cards. They were useful sources of data.

Data Analysis

For the pilot study, I focused on how to analyze data instead of doing an in-depth analysis of the data. As this was a small scale study, I did not use computer software to manage and analyze data. Data analysis and data collection were simultaneous. I transcribed the interviews and used the coding and thematic analysis based on transcripts, field notes, journals, and artifacts. I

also drew on literature to identify themes. I found that earlier documentation was helpful to manage data. I arranged my observations into chronological stories. For example, when I finished my initial stage of observation, I wrote a report by telling each family member's story and daily living. The writing has helped me portray the family life as a whole and their literacy lives as individuals.

Credibility of the Study

Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue that in order to demonstrate "true value", the researcher must show that he/she has represented those multiple constructions adequately. That is, the inquiry is "credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (p. 296). They suggest five techniques to increase the credibility: 1) prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation; 2) peer debriefing; 3) negative case analysis; 4) referential adequacy; 5) member checking.

Prolonged Engagement, Persistent Observation, and Triangulation

As the pilot study was a small-scale study, I spent only three to four hours in observation per week on the site. Triangulation was practised through interviews with the parents, interviews with grandparent, and interviews with the children, documents and artifacts, field notes, and journals. The use of multiple and different sources and methods improved the credibility of the information, findings, and interpretations.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is a process of exposing oneself to disinterested peers in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might remain implicit within the inquirer's mind (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Peer debriefing is a useful technique to establish credibility. Other peers in my ethnography research class helped me probe and reflect on the process of doing ethnography either formally in class or informally during our conversations after class. The instructor of the research class also served as a debriefer as she helped me answer many questions related to the research such as ethics, the progress of the research, my research role, and some methodological issues.

Negative Case Analysis

The goal of negative case analysis is to continuously refine a hypothesis until it accounts for all known cases without exception. As I did not have any hypothesis for the study, this technique was not used to establish credibility.

Referential Adequacy

Referential adequacy is the process of checking preliminary findings and interpretations against archived "raw data". Major findings in the pilot study were checked against field notes, interview transcripts, journals, documents and artifacts.

Member Checking

Member checking is the process of checking data, analytical categories, interpretations, and conclusions with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected. Throughout the process of research, I used member checking to validate my data and my interpretations. All participants read and commented on their interview transcripts. I discussed my major findings and interpretations with them as I analyzed the data.

Other Dimensions: Subjectivity, Gender Role, and Power Relations

Wolcott (1995) regards an ethnographer as an artist. This artist enters the field not only with ontological, epistemological, philosophical, and methodological preoccupations, but also with personal sophistication. The ethnographer as a research instrument is never neutral. Rather, he/she always has subjectivity and bias. Moreover, many factors such as gender of the researcher, and power relations between the researcher and the researched, play an important role in the process of doing ethnography. In this section, I explore some personal dimensions that I encountered and reflected upon during my pilot study.

In Search of My Own Subjectivity

What is subjectivity in qualitative research? Jansen & Peshkin (1992) summarize that although all researchers view subjectivity as dialectical to objectivity, there is no uniform definition of subjectivity in research. Different researchers and philosophers have different concepts of subjectivity and

objectivity as they hold different ontological, epistemological, and methodological premises. Peshkin (1988) and Jansen & Peshkin (1992) regard subjectivity as an "invariable aspect of social research". A researcher's subjectivity operates during the entire research process. It influences the researcher-researched relationship, the researcher's awareness of one's subjectivity, and the researcher's description, interpretation, and presentation of data.

LeCompte (1987) points out that bias and subjectivity in ethnographic research come from two sources—personal experience and professional training. A number of biases and subjectivity related to professional training derive from:

1. the history of anthropology as a discipline; 2. the literary tradition of ethnography such as "reporting on the exotic sites" upon entry and false generalization from the particular; 3. technology and intellectual paradigms; 4. mentors; 5. friends, associates, and colleagues; 6. professional environments; 7. paths of opportunity.

Personal influences originate from the historical era the researcher resides in, his/her age, geographic region, social background, religious training, birth order, family background, and prior cosmopolitan experience.

Alan Peshkin (1988) describes his six subjective I's as a researcher: a) the ethnic maintenance I; b) the community maintenance I; c) the E-pluribus-Unum I; d) the justice-seeking I; e) the pedagogical-meliorist I; f) the nonresearch human I. These I's have shaped his way of doing and writing the research.

I have to admit that I am overwhelmed by LeCompte's analysis. I admire that Peshkin can actually conceptualize his own subjectivity during the process of

research. I know I am subjective either as a researcher or nonresearcher human being. How, then, can I summarize my subjectivity in my own research? It is easier for me to detect the professional bias as I am apprenticing in the intellectual discourses where the traditions of the discipline as knowledge is practised, developed, and passed on. I am very familiar with my personal experiences. I am a female Chinese graduate student in my mid-twenties, born and educated in central China under the Communist philosophy in a Confucian society in late 20th century and now studying in a Canadian university. Bearing all these "facts" of my personal data, going into the field, for example, the Filipino family I studied, I reported what I saw as "I"; I interpreted what I saw as "I". How then can I conceptualize my "I's" like Peshkin? Or how can I detect how and to what extent my personal qualities and attributes influence the research process?

Reflecting on subjectivity is a continuing challenge. Maybe I should not worry too much. Jansen & Peshkin (1992) point out that "subjectivity as a personal quality--as the involvement of self--will be accepted as unavoidably present in social research and as a fact without invariably negative consequences for the outcomes of inquiry" (p. 717).

In Search of Gender Balance

I agree with Denzin (1989) that gender filters knowledge. Fontana & Frey (1994) illustrate that:

[t]he sex of the interviewer and of the respondent does make a difference as the interview takes place within the cultural boundaries of a

paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones. (p. 369)

I think the influence of gender permeates all stages of fieldwork, not just in doing interviews. It is a factor that is predetermined by who the researcher is. It is not chosen. As a female researcher studying a family of five women and one man, I found that gender became an advantage as Warren (1988) indicated (cited in Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 370). My gender allowed me to approach the children without any "genderly" barriers. It helped me talk freely with the children's mother who was in charge of the household. In this sense, my gender contributed to establishment of rapport with them. However, gender can also be a disadvantage. My disadvantage was that I could not achieve the same kind of close friendship with the father who may have significant influence on the children's learning. I noticed that during my visit, my interaction with the father was always very polite and distant. Sometimes, when we were playing or talking, he was silent, almost like an outsider. This discovery made me uncomfortable, as the picture I saw might not have reflected the "true" culture of the family.

In Search of Power Balance

Interviewing is an art. If used effectively, it can help in rapport and trust-building with participants. Traditionally, interviewing assumes asymmetrical power relations between the researcher and the researched. That is, the researcher seeks information and the researched provides it. The researcher is the authority who is studying the "othered" interviewees (Fine, 1994). Fine (1994)

and Wolcott (1995) suggest that interviewees may have something to say about interview techniques or the scope of research, so I asked them to question me about my research at the end of the interviews as a way to work against othering. I sensed the dramatic change in our relationships in that: 1) by asking the researcher questions, the participants gained equal power position and became more engaged in the research. The more they knew what I was doing, the more they were willing to explore the issues with me; 2) the power they gained provided them with more certainty with me; therefore, they had more trust in the researcher. After my interviews with the father, grandmother, and the eldest child, I felt our trust and rapport were elevated to a new level; 3) through dialogue, reciprocity between the researcher and the researched was developed.

Implications for My Dissertation Study

The pilot study strengthened my understanding of the theory and practice of ethnography. The knowledge I gained through the pilot study served as a useful reference for my dissertation research. In the pilot study I not only practised research techniques such as interviewing, transcribing, observing, keeping field notes and journals, collecting documents and artifacts, and identifying themes, but I also learned the procedures for doing qualitative research such as gaining entry, going through ethics approval, developing consent forms and data release forms, collecting data, analyzing and presenting data. The pilot study enabled me to identify themes such as literacy and identity and resistance that I might focus on during my dissertation research. Moreover, it

alerted me to the awareness of dimensions such as my subjectivity, my gender role, and the power relations during the research process. All these helped me deal with the complexity of doing ethnography for my dissertation research. As a researcher commented, the way to learn ethnography is to do it.

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APPENDIX B:
LETTER OF INTENT FOR PARENT OR EXTENDED FAMILY

Letter of Consent: Parent or Extended Family

Dear _____

I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is Guofang Li and I am a graduate student completing a doctoral thesis in the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. I am conducting a research study on Chinese home literacy. As part of the study I would like to visit you and your family in your home. I would like to ask your permission to have you and your children participate in the study.

I would like to visit you once or twice a week at your convenience, and talk to you about how you and your children use and learn English and Chinese in your lives. This work will help language teachers who work with children learning how to read and write and people learning a second language.

I would like to audiotape some of our conversations about reading and writing and occasionally make photocopies of some of your written work so we can understand how learning is occurring. There are no risks involved in this study. Your name and your children's names will be confidential. Pseudonyms will be substituted for your family's names.

The tape recordings of this study will be securely stored and retained for a minimum of five years at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines. The results of the study will be used for my dissertation as well at scholarly conferences and in journal articles. If you are willing to participate in the study, please sign and date the form. **Participation in**

the study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Should you have any questions, or require further information now or throughout the duration of the study, please do not hesitate to contact us: Guofang Li at #966-7021 (office) or # 955-3243 (home) or my supervisor Dr. Sam Robinson at #374-8572, Department of Curriculum Studies, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.

_____ I understand the guidelines above and agree to participate in the research study: *Literacy outside School: Home Practices of Chinese Immigrant Families in Canada*.

_____ I will allow my discussion about reading and writing to be audio-taped.

_____ I will allow my writings to be photocopied.

_____ I understand that the results of the study may be used for the dissertation and scholarly articles and conference presentations.

_____ I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature _____

致学生家长信

尊敬的学生家长

我叫李国芳。我想邀请您的孩子参加由我进行的关于中国移民家庭语言文化的研究。作为本研究项目的要求，我将定期拜访您的家庭，观察您和您的孩子的语言运用及学习情况。特以本信征求您的许可。

我将在您的方便时间拜访您一至两次，和您谈谈您和您的孩子在家里学习运用英语及汉语的经历。这项研究将对语言教师了解学生学习第二语言有很大的帮助。

我将用录音机录下我们的一些关于语言学习的重要谈话。我将这些录音谈话翻译成英文誊写下来，并送交给您检查。您可以任意加以补充，删除，及修改您认为不适当的内容。所有的录音材料将依照萨大要求安全存放在萨大至少五年。我将收集复印一些您的写作样本及其他方面的一些材料。

此次研究结果将被用作我的博士论文，科研会议及期刊论文的材料。为了保护您的权益几隐私，我将不会在我的博士论文，研究报告，及学术论文里透露您的真实姓名，住址，我将一概使用假名。

参加此项研究完全是在自愿的基础上。您可以随时退出这次研究，并不会受到任何惩罚。如果您决定退出，我将不使用任何有关的录音及其他方面的材料。

如果您有任何疑问，请与我或者我的导师Sam Robinson教授联系。我们的地址是萨大课程研究系。我的办公电话是966-7021，住宅电话是955-3243。Sam Robinson教授的电话是374-8572。

我了解以上所述情况，同意参与这项研究。

我准许您对我的谈话进行录音。

我准许您收集复印我们的写作及其他材料。

我知道此研究的结果将被用于您的博士论文，学术论文，及学术研讨会。

我知道我可以随时退出研究，并不会受到任何惩罚。

学生家长签名

日期

研究员签名

APPENDIX C:
LETTER OF ASSENT FOR CHILD

Letter of Assent for Child

Dear _____

I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is Guofang Li and I am a graduate student completing a doctoral thesis in the College of Education, at the University of Saskatchewan. I am conducting a special study on how Chinese children learn to read, write and discuss ideas in different languages (Chinese and English) in their home settings. I would be in your home listening to you read aloud, talk about the stories you have read, watch you write about your experiences or watch you play. I would like to ask your permission to participate in the study.

Sometimes I will want to tape-record some of our discussions so I can remember our ideas. I may even ask you if I can make a photocopy of some of your writings so I can see how you are learning and your report cards to see all the wonderful things you are doing.

I will not use your real name in the study. Neither will I use the real name of your school. Participation in the study is based on your choice. You can leave the study at any time.

The tape recordings of this study will be securely stored and retained for a minimum of five years at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines. The results of the study will be used for my dissertation as well at scholarly conferences and in journal articles.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please sign and date the form.

Participation in the study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Should you have any questions, or require further information now or throughout the duration of the study, please do not hesitate to contact us: Guofang Li at #966-7021 (office) or # 955-3243 (home) or my supervisor Dr. Sam Robinson at #374-8572, Department of Curriculum Studies, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.

_____ I understand the guidelines above and agree to participate in the research study: *Literacy outside School: Home Practices of Chinese Immigrant Families in Canada*.

_____ I will allow my discussion about reading and writing to be audio-taped.

_____ I will allow my writings and report cards to be photocopied.

_____ I understand I can choose to leave the study at any time without penalty.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

致同学信

尊敬的同学_____

我叫李国芳。我想邀请您和您的孩子参加由我进行的关于中国移民家庭语言文化的研究。作为本研究项目的要求，我将定期拜访您的家庭，观察您和您的孩子的语言运用及学习情况。特以本信征求您的许可。

我将在您的方便时间拜访您一周一至两次，看看您在家里是怎样学习运用英语及汉语的。这项研究将对语言教师了解学生学习第二语言有很大的帮助。

我将用录音机录下我们的一些关于语言学习的重要谈话。我将这些录音谈话翻译成英文誊写下来，并送交给您检查。您可以任意加以补充，删除，及修改您认为不适当的内容。所有的录音材料将依照萨大要求安全存放在萨大至少五年。我将收集复印一些您们的写作样本及其他方面的一些材料。

此次研究结果将被用作我的博士论文，科研会议及期刊论文的材料。为了保护您的权益及隐私，我将不会在我的博士论文，研究报告，及学术论文里透露您的真实姓名，住址；我将一概使用假名。

参加此项研究完全是在自愿的基础上。您可以随时退出这次研究，并不会受到任何惩罚。如果您决定退出，我将不使用任何有关的录音及其他方面的材料。

如果您有任何疑问，请与我或者我的导师Sam Roninson 教授联系。我们的地址是萨大课程研究系。我的办公电话是966-7021，住宅电话是955-3243。Sam Roninson 教授的电话是374-8572。

____我了解以上所述情况，同意参与这项研究。

____我准许您对我的谈话进行录音。

____我准许您收集复印我的写作及其他材料。

____我知道此研究的结果将被用于您的博士论文，学术论文，及学术研讨会。

____我知道我可以随时退出研究，并不会受到任何惩罚。

同学及家长签名_____

日期_____

研究员签名_____

APPENDIX D:
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PARENT PARTICIPANT'S INTERVIEW

Guiding Questions for Parent Participant's Interview

Guiding questions:

1. Tell me something about your education and background.
2. Tell me something about your immigration (e.g. reasons for immigration).
3. Tell me something about your earlier experience of job-hunting, and language and culture differences in Canada.
4. What kind of reading and writing do you do at home and at work?
5. Do you do any shared reading and writing activities with your children at home?
6. What are your opinions about reading and writing? How do you think they should be taught?
7. How do you think of your children's language ability in both English and Chinese?
8. How do you think of the value of education for your family in Canadian society?
9. Tell me how Chinese culture is reflected in your family life.
10. How do you feel of being a Chinese in a Canadian society?
11. How do you think of raising your children in a Chinese way in a Western society?

APPENDIX E:
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CHILD PARTICIPANT'S INTERVIEW

Guiding Questions for Child Participant's Interview

Guiding questions:

1. How do you like school?
2. How do you think of your life at school and at home? Do you they are different?
3. What kinds of reading and writing do you do at home?
4. Do you read or write with your parents or siblings?
5. What language do you prefer to use at home? What language do you prefer to use at school? Why?
6. Do you socialize a lot with your friends? What do you normally do with your friend after school?
7. How do your friends think of you as a Chinese?
8. How do you think of yourself being a Chinese in a Canadian society?
9. How do you think of your parents in a Canadian society?
10. How do you think of your teachers? Do they consider you are different or do they assume that your are the same as anybody else? How do you want to be treated?

APPENDIX F:
LETTER OF CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

Letter of Consent for Release of Transcripts

Dear participant,

I appreciate your participation in the research study: *Literacy outside School: Home Practices of Chinese Immigrant Families in Canada*. I am returning the transcripts of your audio-taped interviews for your perusal and the release of confidential information. I will adhere to the following guidelines, which are designed to protect your confidentiality and interests in the study.

1. Would you please read and recheck the transcripts for accuracy of information. You may add or clarify the transcripts to say that you intended to mean or include additional comments. Feel free to write directly on the transcripts. You may also delete any information that you may not want to be quoted in the study.

2. The interpretations from the study will be used in my dissertation, and at scholarly conferences or in journal articles. Except for the researcher in the study, your participation has remained confidential. Your name and school or work place was not given to your school board as a participant nor will your name or school or work place be used in the dissertation or any journal articles or presentations unless you expressively request this.

3. In accordance with the University of Saskatchewan Guidelines on Behavioral Ethics, the tape-recordings made during the study will be securely stored for a minimum of five years at the University of Saskatchewan.

4. Participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any penalty. If this happens, the tape recordings and interview data will not be used.

If you have any questions, or require further information now or throughout the duration of the study, please do not hesitate to contact us: Guofang Li at #966-7021 (office) or # 955-3243 (home) or my supervisor Dr. Sam Robinson at #374-8572, Department of Curriculum Studies, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.

I, _____ (Please sign your name here),
understand the guidelines above and agree to release the transcripts as I have indicated.

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

致家长的关于使用录音材料誊本的许可的信

尊敬的学生家长_____

感谢您和您的孩子参加由我进行的关于中国移民家庭语言文化的研究。作为本研究项目的要求，我将录音材料誊本文还给您审阅。特以本信征求您的许可使用这些材料。

1. 请您仔细检查所有材料的准确性。您可以任意在现有材料上加以补充，删除，及修改您认为不适当的内容。

2. 这些材料的内容将被用作我的博士论文，科研会议及期刊论文的材料。为了保护您的权益及隐私，我将不会在我的博士论文，研究报告，及学术论文里透露您的真实姓名，住址；我将一概使用假名。

3. 所有的录音材料将依照萨大要求安全存放在萨大至少五年。我将收集复印一些您们的写作样本及其他方面的一些材料。

4. 参加此项研究完全是在自愿的基础上。您可以随时退出这次研究，并不会受到任何惩罚。如果您决定退出，我将不使用任何有关的录音及其他方面的材料。

如果您有任何疑问，请与我或者我的导师Sam Roninson 教授联系。我们的地址是萨大课程研究系。我的办公电话是966-7021，住宅电话是955-3243。Sam Roninson 教授的电话是374-8572。

_____我了解以上所述情况，同意您使用这些录音材料誊本。

家长签名_____

日期_____

研究员签名_____